Seeing Through God's Eyes

Discerning Biblical Wisdom for Faithful Living

Dr. Anudeep Manne

Copyright © 2025 by Dr. Anudeep Manne.

This work is dedicated to the public domain using CC0 1.0 Universal (CC0 1.0).

To the extent possible under law, Dr. Anudeep Manne has waived all copyright and related or neighbouring rights to this work worldwide.

This dedication does not waive or limit any moral rights, privacy rights, or other rights that may apply.

For the full terms, see https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

This book is offered freely as a gift to the body of Christ. Churches, small groups, and individuals are encouraged to copy, print, translate, modify, and distribute it for ministry, teaching, and personal growth—without restriction or permission.

You can copy, translate, modify, and distribute this resource, without restriction, and without needing to ask permission. This resource is freely given (Matt 10:8) for the sake of the gospel.

Visit: https://sellingjesus.org/free.

Published by Dr. Anudeep Manne.

First Edition.

Unless otherwise noted, quotations marked (NIV) are taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. *New International Version*® and NIV® are registered trademarks of Biblica, Inc. Use of either trademark for the offering of goods or services requires the prior written consent of Biblica US, Inc.

Quotations marked (GNT) are taken from the *Good News Translation* in *Today's English Version—Second Edition*.

Copyright © 1966, 1971, 1976, 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

These quotations do not exceed the publishers' guidelines for non-commercial use (up to 500 verses per translation, not comprising more than 25% of the total text). For permissions beyond these limits, contact the respective publishers: Biblica (biblica.com), American Bible Society (americanbible.org), Tyndale House (tyndale.com)

Disclaimer: The insights in this book are for evangelical encouragement and reflection. They do not substitute for professional pastoral, psychological, or medical counsel.

For questions or to share adaptations, contact authormanne@proton.me.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

To my mom and dad, my sister Anusha and her husband Daniel, and my niece Addison and nephew Adoniah.

To my brothers from Base Church, KW region—meeting Thursday nights at Brian Houser's place for Bible study.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to those who showed interest in the project; granted access to the first draft and subsequent revisions during its early stages; and offered invaluable insights, suggestions, encouragement, and contributions toward the book's materialisation.

Melanie Hallock

Jyotsna John Thallaplly

Anusha Manne Raby

Daniel Raby

Gary Kohler

Taylor Stewart

Erick Nessel

Brian Houser

Sarah Ruth McCracken

Iainehskhem Khongdup

Dr. Anudeep Manne

Contents

Introduction

1. Right Over Good

2. From Disappointment to Devotion

3. Even If He Doesn't

4. Patience and Procrastination

5. Seeing as God Sees (Part 1)

   (i) Where did God come from?

   (ii) Where is God in all the chaos?

   (iii) God, Time, and Humans

   (iv) The Image of God

6. Seeing as God Sees (Part 2)

   (i) Persevering Love

   (ii) Hearts and Motives

   (iii) Entropy

   (iv) Test and See

7. S. A. D. and the Light that Lifts

8. Building Habits That Last

9. Living to Give

10. The Tenth Commandment

Conclusion

Bibliography

About the Author

Introduction

I vividly recall listening to the song "Give Me Your Eyes" for the first time by contemporary Christian artist Brandon Heath, who co-wrote it with Jason Ingram. This collaboration later earned him a Grammy Award nomination in 2009. I first heard it on newreleasetoday.com, a platform for Christian artists and authors to promote their work to a wider audience. Back in 2011, when I encountered it, the site was known as newreleasetuesday.com because they used to offer free downloads of songs from Christian artists releasing music on Tuesdays. They continue this practice to this day. The song's chorus is as follows:

"Give me your eyes so I can see,
Everything that I keep missing,
Give me your love for humanity,
Give me your arms for the broken-hearted, the ones that are far beyond my reach.
Give me your heart for the ones forgotten. Give me your eyes so I can see."

While I loved the catchy, hip-hop style of the music, I found myself pondering its meaning. "How does one wear God's eyes, and why would you ask that from God?" were my questions—innocent, I know, but inquisitive, much like Nicodemus when he asked Jesus, "How can this be?" upon learning that one must be born again (John 3:9). As I matured spiritually and gradually acquired knowledge of Christ, I realised the importance of seeing people as God sees them and loving them as He loves them. This perspective extends beyond individuals; it also encompasses viewing situations and circumstances through His lens. What we perceive with our limited human eyes is often superficial and fallible, but through divine insight, we learn, discern, and make choices that please Him, just as Samuel had to choose and anoint David as King from his brothers (1 Samuel 16:6-13).

Why does this book exist? What does it do for the writer?

In the relentless rhythm of modern life, it is all too easy to navigate by the dim light of our own understanding. My mother frequently quotes the Bible reference: "...faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through preaching Christ" (Romans 10:17, GNT). According to David

Guzik, during Paul's time, hearing was a reflection of first-century life. While some people could read, the average citizen depended on hearing for access to the Message, which was often scarce and sometimes restricted. In the 21st century, despite having access to His Word in various forms and formats, many find it difficult to pause and listen. While hearing is just one aspect of accessing His Word—similar to language learning, which involves speaking, conversing, reading, and writing—prolonged exposure to His Word is essential. Practice is required to bear fruit. Although this book is but one of many—an imperfect work compared to the Bible, which is pure milk—many may not read it, but this does not dishearten me. Writing this book serves as my way of recording the insights I have gained through meditating on the Word of God, observing, ruminating, discerning, and ultimately sharing with others so that I can contribute to the Great Commission (Mark 16:15). If reading this book brings someone to Christ or strengthens their faith in Him, it is worth it; even one soul saved brings joy in Heaven (Luke 15:7). Even if it does not, I hold onto the hope that someone will one day discover this book and read it. He fed me, so I

am feeding others. He loved me, and so I am loving others through this book.

We all possess a light within us that He instilled when He formed us in our mothers' wombs. He bestowed upon us talents—a unique measure, a portion of Himself. I believe the light in our lamps dims as we rely on our own understanding while navigating this world. Just as a lamp requires oil to burn brightly, we too must depend on His wisdom from His Word to glorify Him with our lives. What good does it do if the lamp is hidden or covered? What value is there in not sharing what I have learned? Would God be pleased with me? No. Many of us possess talents yet struggle to find the time to glorify God with what we have, which is a tragic waste. Charles Spurgeon wisely stated, "If you cannot go out ploughing, you shall go down into the kitchen and do some cooking; and if you cannot feed the cattle, you shall bring up a dish of food for your Master. This is a change of work for you; but you are to keep on as long as you live." The show must go on, my friends, for as Spurgeon reminds us, "Our service put beside Christ's is like one single grain of dust compared to the mighty orb of the sun." Yet, paradoxically, He will appreciate our efforts and

reward us. He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21, 23, GNT). What He did for us was out of pure love, and what we do for Him, though it may seem insignificant, is an expression of gratitude and duty.

What's the purpose of this book? What does it do for the reader?

The purpose of *Seeing Through God's Eyes: Discerning Biblical Wisdom for Faithful Living* is to equip believers with a scriptural framework for perceiving and responding to life's complexities as the Almighty does. In an era marked by deconversion stories fuelled by unanswered prayers and the seductive allure of instant gratification, we risk forsaking the narrow way for broader, more palatable paths. Yet Scripture calls us higher: to a faith that endures, envisioning Daniel 3:17–18; to patience that surpasses procrastination; and to habits that honour God in every breath.

At its core, this book advocates a singular thesis: true faithful living emerges not from striving harder in our strength, but from aligning our vision with God's—exchanging distorted perceptions for the clarity of His Word and Spirit. This

alignment fosters resilience in the face of trials, contentment over coveting, and a sacrificial generosity that mirrors Christ's own. We explore how God's perspective redeems our stress, anxieties, and depressions (S.A.D.), transforming disorder into purposeful order. As Colossians 3:2 (NIV) urges, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things," so too must we cultivate eyes attuned to eternal realities.

This pursuit is not mere abstract theology; it represents practical discipleship. By emulating biblical figures such as the fiery furnace trio (Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego), the persevering Job, or the widow's extravagant giving, readers will gain tools to navigate relational challenges, discern prophetic deceptions, and develop lasting habits rooted in divine DNA. Ultimately, seeing through God's eyes liberates us from self-deception, empowering a life of bold prayer, grateful stewardship, and unwavering devotion. In yielding to this vision, we not only endure the world's cruelties but thrive as luminous witnesses to His unchanging faithfulness.

Viewing the world through human lenses distorts our path, breeding regret, division, and spiritual drift. As Proverbs 3:5, 6 (NIV) admonishes, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and

lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." What if, amid our chaos, we learned to adopt God's unerring gaze? This book invites you to embark on that very journey—a pursuit of discerning biblical wisdom that transforms disappointment into devotion, chaos into clarity, and fleeting habits into an eternal legacy.

Book Overview

This 20,000-word exploration unfolds across ten chapters, progressively building from foundational discernment to embodied faithfulness. The early chapters lay the groundwork for right-hearted living, while the latter apply this vision to personal formation and communal impact, culminating in a call to eternal contentment.

Chapters 1–3 address the essence of obedience amid deception and trial: "Right Over Good" unpacks Saul's folly and Jesus' solitude to prioritise divine rightness; "From Disappointment to Devotion" confronts the shadows of deconversion through Job's endurance and Hebrews 13:7; and "Even If He Doesn't"

draws from Daniel 3 and personal stands to embrace Spirit-empowered boldness.

Chapters 4–6 pivot to God's perspective on time, chaos, and motives: "Patience and Procrastination" contrasts biblical waiting (Hebrews 6:17) with modern delay; "Seeing as God Sees (Part 1)" probes divine origins, and timeless patience (Hebrews 11:11–13), affirming humanity's imago Dei (Genesis 1:26–27); while "Seeing as God Sees (Part 2)" examines persevering love (Isaiah 49:16), heart's motives (1 Samuel 16), entropy's reversal, and testing truth (2 Peter).

The final quartet integrates wisdom into daily rhythms: "S.A.D. and the Light that Lifts" counters stress with rest in Christ (Matthew 11:25–30); "Building Habits that Last" champions consistency through Ecclesiastes 11:4; "Living to Give" emulates John 3:16 through tithing stories; and "The Tenth Commandment" fosters gratitude over jealousy (Exodus 20:17; Proverbs 14:30).

Ultimately, my personal experiences, steeped in evangelical traditions, have solidified my conviction that biblical wisdom is not esoteric knowledge but accessible grace for the weary

soul. I share this not as an infallible guide, but as a fellow traveller, indebted to the same Saviour who invites us all to "come to me... and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28, GNT). It is this shared vulnerability that binds us, urging us onward together. As we navigate these pages, may the Holy Spirit sharpen your sight, transforming knowledge into lived wisdom. The road ahead promises both challenge and comfort—join me in stepping forward with expectant hearts.

1. Right Over Good

Once, there was a beggar who was hungry and searching for food. A preacher passed by, looked at him, and began to preach about the coming of Jesus, the importance of repentance, confession of sin, and belief in Christ, thumping his Bible against the beggar's head before departing. Another man passed by, saw the beggar's plight, went into a nearby store, bought some bread, returned, and gave it to him. The hungry beggar gobbled it up.

Who acted rightly here, and who did the good thing?

Clearly, the man who fed the beggar did the right thing. The beggar was physically hungry and needed bread, not spiritual nourishment.

James 2:8 (GNT) states, "You will be doing the *right* thing if you obey the law of the Kingdom, which is found in the scripture, 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself.'"

Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation of India and the largest democracy in the world, once remarked, "Even God cannot stand before a hungry man unless in bread's form."

Dr. Anudeep Manne

You might be thinking, "Well, clearly Gandhi is wrong! Nothing is impossible for God. He can make a hungry man not feel hungry or feel full (physically) while he's being preached to by the preacher. He could silence the mouths of those hungry lions when Daniel was thrown into a pit full of them!"

But the thing is, if God intervened, how would the preacher realise whether he did the right thing or the good thing? How would he feel if one day at home he came across James chapter 2? What good is it if the preacher has faith but no actions? (James 2:15-17)

According to Philippians 4:8 (GNT), we can infer that right things are good (or excellent) and praiseworthy things.

Now we understand that right things fall under the category of good things. So, if you're doing the right thing, you're doing the good thing. But if you're doing a good thing, it doesn't necessarily mean you're doing the right thing! Interesting, isn't it?

Sometimes, God requires us to do just the *right* thing to please Him. No dilly-dallying whatsoever. Doing the good thing could be outright disobedience and utterly wrong. One such case

occurred in 1 Samuel chapter 15. During the war against the Amalekites, Samuel ordered King Saul and his men to go and "completely destroy everything…don't leave a thing" (1 Samuel 15:3, GNT). However, they "spared" the life of King Agag of the Amalekites and "did not kill the best sheep and cattle, the best calves and lambs or anything else that was *good*" (1 Samuel 15:9, GNT). They did so intending to offer the best sheep and cattle as a sacrifice. Samuel furiously admonished Saul, saying, "Which does the Lord prefer: obedience or offerings and sacrifices? It is better to obey Him than to sacrifice the best sheep to Him" (1 Samuel 15:22, GNT).

It seems the devil cunningly convinced Saul and his men that the sheep and cattle were good and worthy of being a pleasing sacrifice to God, which led them to disregard Samuel's direct orders, resulting in his downfall. Had Saul (a Benjaminite and son of Kish) obeyed and done the right thing by not sparing King Agag and his family's life even for a little while, Haman in the book of Esther would not have existed about 500 years after the events of 1 Samuel chapter 15. I mention this because Haman was a descendant of Agag, as stated in Esther 3:1, while Mordecai was a Benjaminite, just like King Saul and a

descendant of Kish! The Amalekites were arch-nemeses of the Israelites ever since they were coming out of Egypt. They used to attack the Israelites from the rear and kill those who straggled behind. Moses gave special orders to the Israelites regarding the Amalekites: "When the Lord your God has given you the land and made you safe from all your enemies who live around you, be sure to kill all the Amalekites, so that no one will remember them any longer" (Deuteronomy 25: 17-19, 1 Samuel 15: 2, GNT). Just as the Amalekites hated the Israelites, their descendant, Haman, too hated and planned to destroy the Jews and wipe them out, but we see Esther intervening, resulting in Haman suffering the fate he had planned for the Jews - he and his sons were hanged from the gallows (Esther 9: 24 - 26, GNT). This is how brutal disobedience is, my friends. It reverberates across time. It's lethal. Just as one mistake in the Garden of Eden led to humanity's fall into sin and welcomed death, this small act of disobedience from Saul led to the Jews being precariously close to being wiped out during the time of Esther!

Sometimes, God requires only one thing, which is the right thing, and everything else is just unnecessary noise, like when Jesus

visited the house of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38–42, GNT). Martha was "worried and troubled over so many things," but just one thing was needed from her – to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to His teaching, which Mary did – choosing the *right* thing.

Jesus had little time on this planet. He could have been frantically preaching and healing people tirelessly without wasting any time. Yet, we see Jesus slipping away at times to pray alone at dawn or whenever He found some quiet time before going out to meet the crowds, preach the Kingdom of God, and heal them. He clearly had a massive responsibility on His shoulders, yet He found time to talk to His Father. Spurgeon states it clearly: "The way to get the revival is to begin at the Master's feet; you must go there with Mary, and afterwards you may work with Martha."

In 2014, I was an intern at a multispecialty hospital in Bangalore, India. As you know, multiple departments/specialties like Paediatrics, General Medicine, and Surgery have their respective heads of departments (HODs).

I was in the General Medicine department, working closely with and under the HOD of that department – a dignified, well-respected man who made his presence known wherever he went.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

One day, a patient in critical condition was brought into the emergency department. He had severe pneumonia, and his vitals were failing. He required oxygen supplementation as his lungs and trachea (windpipe) were filled with excess phlegm and mucus. His chest rose and fell rapidly and prominently. The HOD was consulted by the junior doctors for his expertise and guidance. He observed, assessed the patient's condition, reviewed his past medical history and medication, analysed, and calculated every possible way to alleviate the patient's symptoms and potentially prevent death by suffocation, but he realised that any attempt to intervene could cause even more pain to the patient.

For instance, if they considered performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation on him, it would most definitely crush his ribcage and collapse his already failing lungs – exacerbating the situation.

After considering every option, in his wisdom and with all the knowledge and expertise at his disposal, and the pressing responsibility he had, he finally decided to sign a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) form.

Now, signing a DNR is a proper and professional way of stating that the patient should be left as he is (in this case, with maximum safe levels of oxygen supplementation) – untouched but monitored, and that any interventions from healthcare professionals (HCPs) could unavoidably bring him closer to death, potentially a violent one.

The HOD took the inquisitive and worried wife of the patient aside and explained the situation to her clearly and succinctly. She sobbed as she was consoled by her family members who had brought her husband to the hospital.

The HOD asked me to fill in the form just as he dictated. As an intern, I felt like I was writing a death sentence, as I had never encountered such a system before. It seemed like a way for doctors to wash the blood off their hands, similar to how Pontius Pilate did. As he dictated and I wrote, the DNR content felt like it said mercilessly, "It's not in our hands anymore." The HOD signed it, the wife signed it, and the chief superintendent of the hospital signed it too, as per protocol.

That afternoon, the patient died, but it wasn't a violent death. It wasn't good. It didn't seem good from any angle, even to you, I

believe, as you read this still with pressing questions lingering at the back of your mind, but it was definitely right as I reflect on that DNR form I filled after all these years.

The Right Can Seem Wrong

Later that day, we were informed that the HOD was grilled and questioned by the superintendent of the hospital for more details regarding the signed DNR and the circumstances involved, in the presence of all the other department heads. As the hospital was fairly new at that time, they didn't want unnecessary attention from the police and the media. However, everything was fine with no red flags, and everything was all right.

You see, the right things can be questionable.

The right things can be strange and hard to comprehend.

The right things might stretch our minds.

Doing the right thing could even mislead us to think like how people believed John the Baptist "had a demon in him" (Luke 7:33, 34 GNT) and that Jesus was a "glutton and a drinker, a friend of tax collectors and other outcasts." Yet, both of them were doing the right things – leading thousands of people to

repentance, preparing the way for the Messiah, teaching, working, loving, and dying for them like no one ever had, respectively.

People may even criticise us for doing the right thing, but we must keep doing them, for John states in 1 John 2:29 (GNT) – "…everyone who does what's right is God's child," so let us love as Jesus loved. The fact of life is no one can please everyone. May we seek wisdom from above to discern what's right in His eyes as we live our lives here on earth.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

Reflection Questions:

- Identify a "good" that has recently led you astray – what one nudge from Samuel might realign it?
- In your own Martha style, what is a "one thing" pause that could settle the whirlwind today?
- Reflecting on that DNR weight, where is a "right" in your days that still feels heavy? How might mercy reframe the burden?

2. From Disappointment to Devotion

In 2017, Bradley Wright, one of the authors at patheos.com published an article that caught my eye—a series on a study of religious deconversion. He discusses four general explanations for deconversion based on analyses of 50 online testimonies posted by former Christians, one of which is a failed relationship with God.

He notes that about half of the writers expressed sentiments that, in some way, God had failed them by not doing what they thought He should. "Unanswered prayers" broke their relationship with God.

One of the testimonies in this category was from a young man raised in a Baptist church, who epitomised this feeling of failure when he wrote about God not answering his prayers regarding family difficulties.

He wrote: “The first time I questioned faith was when my grandmother shrivelled up in front of me for six months due

to cancer. I was 13, and my mother and father were getting a divorce. My father told me I should have been aborted. I prayed to God, but nothing fails like prayers."

Another, a former Roman Catholic, talked about God's inaction during his teenage years: "I prayed and prayed, and things never got better… in fact, they got worse. So, I was like fine… if God can turn His back on me… I can do the same."[1]

There were many other testimonies the article mentioned that made me feel sad. How much more sorrowful God must have felt when they were written!

These testimonies shouldn't be a surprise. We are in the end of days, where the Bible mentions (predicts) in various places that "many will give up their faith..." (Matthew 24:10, GNT), "...some people will abandon the faith in later times..." (1 Timothy 4:1, GNT).

With that said, many of my prayers have gone unanswered, whether reaching for the stars or delving into the deepest abysses known to man. Often, I found myself nudged or redirected to pursue different paths, much like a shepherd guiding their sheep. I seldom liked it, but I learnt to align my

plans with God's, recognising Him as my Creator and understanding that I am nothing without Him. You see, I have complained, shed tears countless times, soaked my pillow at night, and awakened with swollen eyelids. However, I also realised that complaining achieves nothing and often exacerbates the situation.

Whenever the word "complain" comes to mind, the ancient Israelites also come along with it and place themselves in my mental playground. It's amusing, but that's how the Spirit of God is supposed to help you. After all, that's His name—"the Helper," according to John 14:26 (GNT). You see, He's the one who helps you in drawing parallels, discerning, and learning from the Word of God. He's also the Advocate—one who recommends. That easy access to the Word of God or the exact and instant recommendation of an example, Bible character, or section from the Word of God during what you're experiencing comes through meditating on His Word and constantly ruminating on it. Now, how can He, the Advocate, recommend something from His Word if you don't or can't find time to help yourself by "reading" the Word?

Dr. Anudeep Manne

The Peril of Rebellion

Speaking of the Israelites, who were led out of Egypt by Moses after centuries of tyranny, even though they had seen the awesome and wondrous things that God did with His "strong hand" (Deuteronomy 6:21, NLT), they were stubborn; they rebelled, complained, and were disloyal (Hebrews 3:8-11). We see that God made a solemn promise that He would never let them enter the land where He would have given them rest (Deuteronomy 1:34, 35). Because they complained, God refused to listen to their prayers. It would have taken just 11 days to travel from Mount Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea, yet because of their actions, they had to wander aimlessly for 40 years in the wilderness!

You may be a young person who has lost your mother to cancer, or you may be a father who has lost your only son in an accident, or you may be in a failed marriage, or you could be a student who failed a major academic test. You might be expressing sorrow and grief while trying to find answers. Lamenting is good. We see Jeremiah doing that in the book of

Lamentations. Rick Warren, in one of his devotionals, says, "When you complain *about* God, that's an act of rebellion. But when you complain *to* God, that's an act of worship. You can complain *to* God all you want. God can handle it! He can handle your rage, resentment, regrets, and accusations—because He already knows it all."

Enduring in Faith: Models of Steadfast Trust

Yes, that's right. Lamenting to God is good. It's an act of worship. In the Bible, we see Job lamenting. He was once the most righteous person on this planet, and God loved him and blessed him immensely. He had practically everything. He was probably like modern-day Elon Musk—richer than the richest. And in a jiffy, he lost everything! All his ten children (seven sons and three daughters) died, he lost all his possessions, and he himself suffered from a dreadful skin disease.

At one point, in Job 2:9 (GNT), his wife approaches him and says, "Why don't you curse God and die?"

And then, Job responds, "When God sends us something good, we welcome it. How can we complain when He sends us trouble?"

We don't see Job complaining or clenching his fists against God or turning his back on Him. We see him persistently asking questions and affirming God's attributes. He knew God was still loving, all-powerful, a healer, always listening, and faithful. Most importantly, he kept trusting God.

You might be thinking, "This is tough. I can't do this." But we have the Word of God, which is a guide and a lamp to our feet (Psalms 119:105, NLT). We have individuals who have been through worse things than most of us, yet they kept trusting Him. And because they exhibited unwavering faith through thick and thin, the writer of Hebrews says in 13:7: "Remember your former leaders, who spoke God's message to you. Think back on how they lived and died, and imitate their faith."

Let us consider the story of another man, Abraham. The Bible says that Abraham was God's friend because he was completely faithful. The Lord called him once and promised him: "I will give you many descendants, and they will become

a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing…" (Genesis 12:2, GNT).

The following verses state that Abraham was 75 years old. He was married to Sarai and had no children yet. Imagine living your life without having children for 75 years! What's even more extraordinary is that Abraham became a father when he was 100, says Genesis 21:5 (GNT)! 100 years! He had to wait 25 more years for God's promise to be fulfilled! Again, the Bible never says that Abraham, during this period, grew weary, lost all hope, filled himself with disbelief, complained to God, or blamed God.

Now this is very important: "Abram put his trust in the Lord, and because of this, the Lord was pleased with him and accepted him" (Genesis 15:6, GNT).

Towards Unwavering Hope

What do we learn from the accounts of the Israelites, Job, and Abraham?

What can we infer from their stories?

We learn how tragic it can be when we test God's patience like the Israelites did. We see that God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation (James 1:12), as Job experienced in his life. We also see that it is important to trust God and His timing and have hope in Him alone, as Abraham did, even though it took many years for His promise to be fulfilled. We must strive not to get misled or go astray by Satan's schemes. Peter urges us to stand firm against him and to be strong in our faith, not to have a weak mentality (1 Peter 5:9). He goes on to say that our family of believers undergoes the same kind of suffering. It is important to have an accountability partner when we're feeling down or when we feel we are unable to see the horizon. Communication is key. Meeting together is key (Hebrews 10:25). Having a community or church that looks out for one another's interests (Philippians 2:4) could really help us all stay united since we are all part of one body in Christ. Citing the consequences that the Israelites faced when they complained and rebelled against God, the writer of Hebrews warns us to "…be careful that no one has a heart so evil and unbelieving that he will turn away from the living God." He adds, "…you must help one another every day…" (Hebrews 3:12, 13).

My dear friends, let us not grow weary in this cruel world while we face dire circumstances. Let us not lose hope because Jesus did not lose hope while He was among us. For if we are not in Him, we will be like those in this world—fruitless and discarded like a useless branch, gathered into a pile to be burned.

Reflection Questions:

- Think back to a prayer that felt like it vanished into the void. What small shift in perspective, viewing it as a shepherd's nudge, might alleviate the ache today?
- Recall a time when your lament turned to worship (or had the potential to do so). How might voicing a raw "why" to God this week create space for His whisper?
- Imagine Job or Abraham in your position. What single trait of their trust feels like an outstretched hand? How could adopting it for just one hour change your outlook?
- Who in your circle is also navigating these wilderness experiences? What simple "me too" conversation could help strengthen your connections a bit tighter?

Dr. Anudeep Manne

- If hope's flicker is dimming right now, which verse from their stories could you hold close—like a lamp for your next step, no more?

3. Even If He Doesn't

"…. If the God whom we serve is able to save us from the blazing furnace and from your power, then he will. But ***even if he doesn't****, Your Majesty may be sure that we will not worship your god, and we will not bow down to the gold statue that you have set up."* Daniel 3:17, 18 (GNT)

These words were spoken by Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ("the trio") in response to King Nebuchadnezzar, who was filled with rage at them for not obeying his direct order: "Bow down and worship the golden statue. If you do not, you will immediately be thrown into a blazing fire."

If you read the above reference from the Bible repeatedly, you will sense their supreme, unwavering faith in God.

It is quite challenging to say, "even if" when we are embroiled in difficult situations or when we are about to make a significant decision. Although we may not be in life-and-death situations like the trio or like the many missionaries who travelled around the globe to spread the Good News and lost their precious lives for His sake, we often fail to demonstrate unwavering faith through our actions. This is largely due to our flawed human nature. We tend to view situations through our own eyes rather than through God's eyes!

The Peril of Bold Words Without Deeds

We find a person in the Scriptures who spoke in a manner similar to that of "the trio" but could not back it up with actions.

When Jesus told Peter that he would deny Him three times before the rooster crows twice, he emphatically states in Mark 14:31 (NLT): "No! Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!" We know what transpired next. We are aware of the regret that Peter felt after denying Him three times that same night.

We possess a human nature that fervently endeavours to live boldly for God, regardless of the circumstances, yet we almost always fall short. We make statements like, “Yes, I can do that,” or “There’s no way I’m leaving your side,” but executing such commitments perfectly is often difficult. Pride and human resolve frequently emerge when we are impulsive and act on our own. What could be the reason for this? What was the defining factor that distinguished the trio from Peter?

In the first chapter of the second letter to Timothy, Paul encourages him by affirming that he possesses the same “genuine faith” that first filled his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice. He reminds Timothy to “fan into the flames” the spiritual gift God has bestowed upon him. Paul states, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline,” and urges him never to be ashamed to tell others about the Lord. I reference Paul’s conversation with Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:5-8 (NIV) to illustrate that being filled with the Holy Spirit enables us to exhibit our Godly nature to the world and to act righteously during challenging times and

situations. You may be pondering, "Were the trio filled with the Spirit when they confronted the wrath of King Nebuchadnezzar? I thought the Holy Spirit did not exist in the Old Testament."

The Holy Spirit has existed since the beginning. As noted in Genesis 1:2, He is part of the Trinity. There were instances in which several biblical figures were filled with the Spirit and accomplished remarkable feats, such as Gideon in Judges 6:34 and Samson in Judges 14:6, 19, and 15:14. Although the Book of Daniel does not explicitly state that the trio were "filled with the Spirit" or that "the Spirit took control of them" prior to being cast into the furnace, we know that God was with Daniel and the trio, and "gave them knowledge and skill…" (Daniel 1:17, GNT).

A Personal Stand in the Shadow of Idolatry

As a Hospital Pharmacy Intern, I was expected to work alongside doctors during ward rounds, providing bedside patient counselling among other tasks to develop my practical skills. A few other interns and I were assigned to

the hospital's Paediatrics department for three months. The hospital was newly built, with parts of the site still under construction. Two months into our posting in that department, we received news that a separate physiotherapy rehabilitation centre for children and adolescents would be opening soon. We were all excited, as this would provide additional treatment for children with musculoskeletal disorders and allow us to build rapport with the physiotherapists as we worked alongside them. As this was considered a sign of progress for the entire hospital, the department head suggested that a dedication ceremony be held.

The Hindu dedication ceremonies in India involve setting up an idol of a god or goddess, performing rituals, offering garlands of flowers, burning incense, presenting special food to the idol, and distributing that food among the department doctors and other paramedical professionals. The entrance to the rehabilitation centre was also decorated in accordance with Hindu cultural customs. Everything appeared celebratory. All attendees were expected to leave their footwear outside as a sign of

respect and devotion towards the idol inside, and everyone was invited to accept the food offered to the idol and depart in an orderly manner as a blessing.

As a God-fearing Christian, leaving my footwear outside and entering the premises would be perceived as an act of idolatry. If I entered without leaving my footwear, the doctors might view it as a deliberate act of disrespect, potentially resulting in significant backlash. Furthermore, accepting food that had been submitted to the idol would be considered a sin and a serious error of Biblical proportions. Conversely, refusing the food could lead the doctors to think I was disregarding the rules and traditions of Hindu culture. I found myself in a distressing situation, caught in a complex dilemma that put my internship in the Paediatrics department in a precarious position.

I recall taking a moment to speak to God in the adjacent room about the dilemma I was facing. I could feel my hands becoming clammy as I remembered that I had hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating due to stress) at that time, particularly in my palms and soles. I reassured myself that it was not wrong to refuse to comply with their

requests solely based on their religious traditions and rules. All I needed to do was inform the department head of the reason I could not participate in the rehabilitation centre dedication ceremony – to explain that I am a Christian with my own beliefs and to politely decline involvement in any of the proceedings.

All I needed to do was stand firm in my identity as seen by God, and the rest would follow. I was aware that my posting at the department could be jeopardised as a result, and I felt anxious. I approached the department head and explained why I could not take part, and to my surprise, she was completely understanding. She encouraged me not to waste time sitting idly and directed me to the hospital pharmacy to assist the head pharmacist in dispensing medication to outpatients.

What I learnt that day was the importance of standing firm, no matter how challenging it may be, reminding myself of my identity in Christ, and not to stress too much, as I share the burden with Jesus. He leads us by holding our hands, and even if things do not go according to plan, everything will ultimately be fine.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

Reflecting on that experience today, I recognise that I felt more like a child of God, determined to proclaim my allegiance to Him, regardless of the outcome. As Paul mentioned to Timothy, being filled with the Spirit empowers you to be courageous and to stand up for God.

Refined by Fire: The Purpose of Trials

When trials confront us, we must not succumb to overwhelm, for it is through these challenges that we are transformed into valuable instruments of God. We need to recognise that God tests us to determine whether we possess "genuine" faith that enables us to endure. Peter's first letter states in 1:7, 8 (GNT) that the purpose of trials "is to prove that your faith is genuine. Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure." Thus, trials serve to assess the authenticity of our faith in God.

Furthermore, Ecclesiastes provides insight into God's role in our triumphs and tribulations in 7:14 (GNT): "When things are going well for you, be glad, and when trouble

comes, just remember God sends both happiness and trouble; you never know what is going to happen next."

One of the most profound tests by God is recorded in Genesis chapter 22.

It begins with: "Sometime later, God tested Abraham…." God instructed him to take his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved dearly, and go to the land of Moriah to offer him as a sacrifice.

Imagine being married around the age of 40, receiving a promise from God that you would have many descendants at age 75 (while your wife is no longer able to conceive at that age), and finally having a child at 100. On top of that, God asks you to sacrifice that only child whom you love so deeply!

Abraham did not flinch. He demonstrated unwavering faith. He ascended the mountain, bound his son, and raised the knife to sacrifice him.

You see, Abraham believed in the promise God made to him when he was approximately 75. He must have thought to himself, "***Even if*** God takes Isaac from me, He will

provide…" It is noteworthy that in verse 14, after this profound "test" of faith, Abraham named the place, "The Lord Provides."

Do we possess that kind of faith in our lives?

Enduring Legacy: Horatio Spafford's Lament

Allow me to introduce another notable figure in faith, whose compelling and poignant true story is recounted by Kenneth W. Osbeck in his book *101 Hymn Stories*. Horatio G. Spafford suffered the tragic loss of his four daughters in a shipwreck. Rather than succumbing to bitterness or resentment towards God, he chose to move forward and composed a beautiful hymn that is widely known and sung in churches around the world today.

Horatio G. Spafford was born on 20th October 1828 in New York. As a young man, he established a successful legal practice in Chicago. Alongside his financial achievements, he maintained a strong commitment to Christian activities and enjoyed a close and active relationship with D. L. Moody and other evangelical leaders of his time.

Some months prior to the Chicago Fire of 1871, Spafford invested heavily in real estate along the shore of Lake Michigan, and his holdings were devastated by the disaster. Subsequently, he lost his four-year-old son to scarlet fever. In an effort to provide rest for his wife and four daughters, as well as to assist Moody and Sankey in one of their campaigns in Great Britain, Spafford planned a European trip for his family in November 1873. However, due to unexpected last-minute business developments, he was required to remain in Chicago, and he sent his wife and four daughters ahead as scheduled on the *S.S. Ville du Havre*. He intended to follow in a few days. On November 22, the ship was struck by the *Lochearn*, an English vessel, and sank within twelve minutes. Several days later, the survivors were finally landed at Cardiff, Wales, and Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband, "Saved alone." Shortly thereafter, Spafford departed by ship to join his grieving wife. It is believed that, while at sea near the area where his four daughters had drowned, Spafford penned these words, which profoundly encapsulate his personal grief: "When sorrows like sea billows roll…" Notably, however, Spafford's

hymn does not dwell on the theme of life's sorrows and trials; rather, it focuses in the third stanza on the redemptive work of Christ and, in the fourth stanza, anticipates His glorious Second Coming. From a human perspective, it is remarkable that one could endure such profound personal tragedies and sorrows as Horatio Spafford did and still assert with such convincing clarity, "It is well with my soul."[2]

This man's story differs somewhat from Abraham's. He lost his four daughters, yet he maintained his belief in the "redemptive work of Christ," as the author notes. Today, he remains an inspiration for us to declare, "Even if…" in the face of trials and tragedies, as he did.

The Christian journey is often marked by unexpected twists and turns, with triumphs and tragedies interspersed with trials and temptations. It is never easy to lead a life of unwavering faith like Abraham, Horatio Spafford, and many others whose stories we may not know. Jesus also demonstrated during His time on earth the importance of resisting the sinful nature that accompanies suffering.

Imitating the Faithful: A Call to Christlikeness

About 30 years after denying Jesus, having conversed with Jesus about tending to His sheep, enduring imprisonment, and facing persecution on multiple occasions, Peter writes a letter to the persecuted Christians in Rome: "For God called you to do good, ***even if*** it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you. He is your example, and you must follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21, NLT).

Do you recognise the transformation in Peter from his former self to the new? The change that Peter underwent after being filled with the Spirit cannot be fully grasped through human wisdom—it is akin to Saul becoming Paul. The spirit-filled life prioritises eternal hope in God over the transient suffering of this world.

It is essential for us as Christians to take a step back and observe how these great men of God lived and thrived boldly as His children, regardless of the cost. We, too, must strive to respond with "even if" when challenges

arise; failing to do so makes us akin to the world, and what value is there in emulating the world?

Therefore, as the writer of Hebrews states in 13:7 (GNT): "…Think back on how they (former leaders/ancestors) lived and died, and imitate their faith," let us learn to follow in their footsteps, keeping our eyes on Jesus and the reward that awaits those who dedicate their lives solely to glorifying His name.

Reflection Questions:

- Recall a trial where surrender felt impossible—what one attribute of God (e.g., His provision as with Abraham) might you affirm today to echo the trio's resolve?
- Consider a current decision evoking Peter's early bravado—how could a brief pause for prayer, as Jesus modelled, invite the Spirit's power for authentic action?
- Drawing from 1 Peter 2:21, note a recent hardship mirroring Christ's—how might viewing it as refining

"genuine faith" (1 Peter 1:7) shift your perspective towards endurance?

- Like Spafford's hymn amid loss, list three "even if" truths from Scripture (e.g., Jehovah-Jireh in Genesis 22:14)—how could voicing one in prayer foster rest in God's redemptive work?

4. Patience and Procrastination

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines the terms "Patience" and "Procrastination" as follows:

Patience (*noun*): The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious.

Procrastination (*noun*): The action of delaying or postponing something.

I hope by now, we are all cognisant of the extraordinary levels of patience demonstrated by figures such as Abraham, Job, and others in the Bible as they endured numerous tests and trials. While we strive to emulate the lives of our ancestors, we often find the standard they set to be daunting as we navigate our own lives. We frequently find ourselves good at enduring long queues at the café or sitting in traffic on a Friday evening without a hint of displeasure, as we

understand what awaits us and have adapted to these circumstances.

But what happens when we find ourselves waiting for something we have desired for an extended period, and it feels as though time has come to a standstill? We may begin to feel overwhelmed, our shoulders drooping, uncertain of how to occupy our minds during this period.

God may have promised you something through His Word, and while you are confident in this promise, doubts may creep in about whether it will ever come to fruition. Hope and trust in God can begin to feel as fragile as candle flames flickering in a breeze.

It is important to recognise that the trust and hope we place in God fuel our patience to receive what has been promised. We worship a faithful God who is a fulfiller of promises. We can always seek refuge in His Word regarding His divine faithfulness; as the writer of Hebrews notes in 6:17, “To those who were promised, God wanted to make it clear that he would never

change his purpose." It is entirely possible to lose hope and trust in God due to the distractions of this world, similar to Peter's experience while walking on water towards Jesus in Matthew 14:29-30. The devil excels at playing mind games, leading us to succumb to temptation and our sinful nature. Consequently, when trials and tribulations come knocking at our door as we await the fulfilment of God's promises in our lives, we may become annoyed or anxious, which often displeases God.

Our own sufferings can lead us to our sinful nature and ultimately to our downfall, handing the victory over to the devil. While it may not always be apparent, this is a carefully orchestrated chain reaction of thoughts, emotions, and actions.

When we begin to feel frustrated, we may grow weary and start complaining, which can lead to giving up and straying from our path or becoming disobedient. Disobedience is a violation of the law, which constitutes sin, and sin ultimately leads to death (Romans 6:23).

We must remember that God watches over us every second of the day, fully aware of our levels of patience. He teaches us the art of patience under trials through endurance, as Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 1:8 (GNT), “keeping you (us) firm till the end.” Romans 8:29 (NLT) tells us that God desires for us to become like Him through Jesus, to be part of His family as His children. But what kind of child of God does not embody godly characteristics (fruit of the Spirit)?

God does not solely wish for us to develop patience in our Christian journey; He desires for us to bear all the fruits mentioned in Galatians 5:22. This often involves placing us in situations or around people that encourage our growth. If we lack self-control, we may be placed in circumstances where we must learn to manage our emotions or desires. Equally, He teaches us to find joy even when our surroundings appear bleak.

It is crucial to understand that becoming like Him is not achievable through our strength alone; it is God who works within us continually, providing us with the

desire and power to do what pleases Him (Philippians 2:13).

It is common to have questions such as, "How do we wait on God while simultaneously distracting our minds from the devil's attacks?" or "How do we cultivate hope and trust in God to enhance our patience?"

Below are a few strategies that I find helpful when I feel stagnant in my Christian walk of faith:

1. **Count my blessings**:

   It is true that God has instilled in us a desire to know the future (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We are often eager to discover what lies ahead. While hope and anticipation are positive, it is equally vital to pause occasionally and reflect on the past, recognising the mighty works God has accomplished in our lives. This perspective should characterise our Christian journey. We must acknowledge that He has always been with us, guiding us at every step, and will continue to do so. Remember His loving kindness and compassion that surround us

daily, providing for our needs. We should surrender our burdens to Him (Psalms 55:22), for He is the source of our rest (Matthew 11:28). In doing so, we cultivate a sound mind and experience the divine peace that transcends understanding. Praying daily—not only for the fulfilment of our desires but also with genuine gratitude—can be immensely beneficial. Moreover, while praying, it is crucial to believe that He has already granted us what we have requested.

2. **Dwell in His Word:**

Hebrews 4:12 (GNT) states, "The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double-edged sword…It judges the desires and thoughts of man's heart."

Jesus instructs us not merely to listen to His words but to obey them; otherwise, we risk perishing like the foolish man who builds his house on sand (Matthew 7:26, GNT).

We should not simply read or listen to His Word and then proceed to go on living our lives. As James advises in 1:22-23 (GNT), we must not deceive

ourselves in this manner but rather put His teachings into practice. We should meditate on His Word, allowing it to reveal its profound truths about how to navigate this world as mere strangers on our way to our promised destination. We need to arm ourselves with this mighty sword provided by the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) to combat the devil. In doing so, we enable God to guide us in all our endeavours and grant us victory.

3. **Never procrastinate:**

   This is perhaps the most overlooked aspect by many contemporary Christians who wait on God yet take no action themselves! Each of us has been gifted by God in unique ways, with different talents that can be used to assist those around us and glorify Him.

   As we wait for God's timing to fulfil His promises in our lives, we must diligently utilise our talents to bring Him joy. The Bible states in James 4:17 (GNT), "…the person who does not do the good he knows he should do is guilty of sin."

Casper ten Boom, a hardworking Swedish watchmaker, did not hesitate to provide shelter and protection to Jews being hunted down by German soldiers during WWII, resulting in his arrest and imprisonment in concentration camps. He believed it was God's calling to assist them, regardless of the consequences. God must have been pleased with him, as Casper believed in the saying, “Service to man is service to God.”[3]

We need to shift our focus from ourselves to the betterment of others. Patience does not entail waiting on God all day without engaging in other activities. We must overcome our complacency, stand firm, and begin to reap, for Jesus states that “the harvest is large” (Matthew 9:37, GNT). The devil is cunning and can easily confuse us between patience and procrastination. We must not fall for this deception. Instead, we should pray for God's guidance to fulfil His will, recognising that we do not belong to ourselves but to Him alone, as He redeemed us with His own life on the cross. The devil's attacks can be so

relentless that they drain our energy and enthusiasm for God. We must seek His grace during our moments of weakness, for His power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9, GNT).

I acknowledge that figures like Abraham, Job, and many other biblical heroes have set exceptionally high standards for Christian living. We must always strive to endure our present sufferings without succumbing to frustration. Let us be filled with eagerness and hope to serve Him wholeheartedly, so that one day we may share in His glory for eternity.

Reflection Questions:

- What is one past "mighty work" from God that still brings a smile to your face? How might acknowledging it today steady your wait?
- In a situation where delay is challenging, what is a small "do it now" step—perhaps a kind word or a passage of Scripture—that could lighten the atmosphere?

- Who in your circle requires assistance today? Note one way your gifts could alleviate their burdens.
- If hope feels fragile, what promise from His Word could you whisper back to Him this week as fuel for your spirit?

5. Seeing as God Sees (Part 1)

Praying bold prayers is essential. Asking God to help us perceive everything through His eyes should be a part of our daily conversation with Him. Why this specific request? He created us and desires for us to become like Him, and we must yearn to emulate Him. Our worldly human perspective is flawed, opinionated, and judgmental. We do not view things, people, and situations as God sees them. Practising this according to His Word and meditating upon it assists and guides us in viewing matters from His perspective. In this chapter, I outline some insights I have learned or discerned in detail that may help answer some pressing questions you might have. Remember, the Word is God Himself, and meditating upon His Word with the Spirit's guidance will reveal much about Him. Do this consistently.

(i) Where did God come from?

"There are some things that our Lord our God has kept secret..." Deuteronomy 29:29 (GNT)

"For God in His wisdom ***made it impossible for people to know Him*** *by means of their own wisdom…For what seems to be* ***God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom****…" 1 Corinthians 1:21, 25 (GNT)*

Sometimes, when your mind is like a clean slate without any scribbles, questions like these arise unexpectedly. It is akin to the creative mind at work while you are showering early in the morning.

Do not be disheartened after reading the aforementioned Bible references. Keep reading. You will likely gain some wisdom even if you do not ultimately understand the origins of God. You might even prepare yourself to explain this kind of mind-boggling question to someone else. Who knows? After all, it is important to look through God's eyes rather than merely our own!

Dr. Anudeep Manne

Now, let's say you created or invented a robot. You give the robot arms like those of humans and wheels that swivel for feet, with a wide base to enable it to move around the house freely without tripping or falling easily.

Then, you assign it a purpose — it must sweep the floor, mop, wash the dishes, dry them, systematically arrange them in the cupboard, do laundry, fold the clothes, and organise them in the shelves or closet.

Now, does this robot need to know your date of birth, where you studied, or who your parents are? No, right? It's unnecessary. What would it do with that information? Would it tighten its nuts and bolts, oil itself, and perhaps start a rebellion?

Let's consider another example. Let's think about humans in this context, rather than a robot.

Imagine you have a child. You literally created them — all the flesh and bones — it's your child, and they are now 2 or 3 years old. Does the child need to know your date of birth? What would the child do with that knowledge? Does it hold any significance for their childish, innocent mind? All they

want to do is eat dirt and dance to the tune of *"Baby Shark"*. Even if you provide that child with your personal information, are they capable of making any sense of it?

Simply put, if God one day decided to tell us where He came from, our minds wouldn't be ready (in fact, they'll never be ready!), and our minds are incapable of understanding the depth of the information He would provide about Himself. It is akin to a carnivorous animal (such as a tiger) eating grass for the first time only to vomit it out later, as it is incapable of digesting it. The knowledge He provides about Himself could be 100 or even 1000 times more complex than a Christopher Nolan film. Who knows?

A couple of questions may arise in your mind now.

For instance, "What about the scientific experiments being conducted to determine whether God exists?" "Do you think scientists will one day be able to finally resolve this mind-boggling question of God's origins?"

My answer is: No.

Why?

Science is a term coined by humans. If you ask Google, "Define Science," it states, "Science is the study of the physical and natural world through observation and experiment."

Now, God created humans, and humans coined the term Science. Doesn't that imply that God *indirectly* created science as well? Consider this: He created EVERYTHING, didn't He?

In conclusion, can a robot, a child, or even science explain their creator's origins?

Only if the *creator* provides the answer and the *created* are capable of understanding, discerning, and properly digesting the information provided. Then, yes, definitely, yes.

Has God provided information in the Bible regarding His origins?

Unfortunately, no.

In fact, He has made it impossible for us to know Him, as indicated by the Biblical references mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

(ii) Where is God in all the chaos?

Mass shootings, wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, famine, and deadly diseases are occurring all around the world as I write this. Approximately 100 people die every minute. Since all these events were foretold and predicted to occur and intensify in the end times, we cannot blame God; He is not permitting these occurrences to happen, nor is He turning His face away while conditions on Earth deteriorate.

The Bible states in Romans 6:23 (NIV), “The wages of sin is death.”

The aforementioned calamities exist because sin exists in this world. Consequently, because sin exists, death exists. So, who introduced sin into this world?

Recall the time when God instructed in the Garden of Eden, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil”? (Genesis 2:17, NIV)

Unfortunately, we did not listen. We disobeyed a direct command from God. Thus, with sin came death into this world - death manifesting as mass shootings, wars, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, famine, and deadly diseases.

God has always been present, observing everything unfold. He granted us free will, but we chose to sin. In simple terms, we inhabit a land of the dead (the world) and our objective is to reach the Land of the Living (heaven), where there is no sickness, pain, suffering, sorrow, grief, disease, or death, and to reunite with our loving Creator.

Only through His abundant grace and mercy is there still balance in this world — the sun rises and sets every day; you woke up today to read this, with your heart continuing to beat and your lungs expanding and contracting in your chest involuntarily.

Be glad and thankful to God that His mercies are new every morning.

(iii) God, Time, and Humans

We have already established that God is sovereign over everything. He created everything — including time and humans.

The moment He created light and separated it from darkness, He initiated time (Genesis 1:4-5). Since He created it, He exists outside of it; He is neither influenced by it nor controlled by it. Thus, He remains the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8 GNT) — meaning God does not age and has no expiry date (Hebrews 1:12b). He is immortal and everlasting!

Since He exists outside of time, it may be something tangible to Him. I firmly believe He perceives it as a person would a freshly picked apple. He can carefully examine the spots on its skin, cut it open – He can do virtually anything with it.

As for us humans, we were created in His image. Like God, we initially had no concern for time – none whatsoever. The past, present, and future were all before us, open and

unhidden, until one day we disobeyed, and sin and death entered, transforming us into mortals.

We now live *in* time and are surrounded and influenced by it. We view it like a tourist exploring a city, admiring all the ancient, spectacular architecture. We age. One day we are born, and the next, we die. We possess a past, a present, and a future that we cannot fully perceive, and we cannot halt time.

You may be thinking, "I wish I had that kind of God-like control over time…" We could have that control too. Trust me. Only if we are His true children of God.

If you are a child of God, it means God is your Father, and you love, trust, and depend on Him completely and wholeheartedly, just as a child does with its parents. Only then will you be able to view time as God does.

This means you won't be concerned about marrying at 40 or 50 and having children at around 70 or 80. You'll trust that God will work everything out in one way or another, and you will possess incredible patience for things to unfold in your life and for God's promises to be fulfilled. Even if they do not occur during your lifetime, you will be at peace with it, just as

Abraham did not live long enough to see the promise of multitudes of descendants fulfilled.

He is likely now joyfully observing all his descendants walking the surface of this planet, signifying God's promise coming to fruition (Hebrews 11:11–13).

Therefore, trust in God is essential.

Trust in God as Abraham did.

Let your trust be innocent and *childlike*. If we do not love and trust Him as little children do, and instead possess a love that is *childish*, how can we expect to receive His kingdom? How can we enter it? (Luke 18:16, 17).

(iv) The Image of God

I believe that God's DNA is present in all living things He has created, particularly in humans, as He breathed His life-giving breath into us (Genesis 2:7, GNT). He made us in His image, and we resemble Him (Genesis 1:26-27, GNT). Although we have fallen into sin, which has obscured His divine image within us, His mark on our hearts—though faded—remains.

This is evident in the qualities and attributes we possess that demonstrate we were made by our Creator, resembling Him and created for Him. These innate human traits reflect God's character:

- **Love for One Another**

Our natural desire for deep relationships and community reflects the relational nature of the triune God, where love exists in community rather than solitude (John 17:21-23, NIV). In the Garden of Eden, humanity was designed for harmonious fellowship, first with God and then with each other, without any isolation. Even after the Fall, this desire remains as a divine echo, drawing us toward covenantal connections that hint at eternal communion. Deuteronomy 6:5 (NIV) commands us to love God with all our being, which extends to neighbourly love in Leviticus 19:18 (NIV) ("Love your neighbour as yourself"), a principle Jesus affirms as central (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV). 1 John 4:7-8 (NIV) states, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." This

innate social impulse thus bears witness to our creation in the image of a loving Creator.

- **Craving What the Future Holds**

Humanity's quest to explore eternity, mortality, and the origins of the universe stems from an innate awareness of timeless existence, unmarred by decay in Eden (Genesis 2:17, where death enters only through disobedience). Before the Fall, humans were immortal, unbound by time's entropy, much like God's eternal nature (Psalm 90:2). This longing—expressed through philosophical inquiries or scientific pursuits—indicates a soul oriented toward the infinite, resisting the finality of death and seeking restoration to that original state. Ecclesiastes 3:11 (GNT) states, "He has set the right time for everything. He has given us a desire to know the future, but never gives the satisfaction of fully understanding what He does." This "desire to know the future" fuels our forward gaze. Hebrews 11:1-3 (GNT) connects faith to understanding "what cannot be seen" and the origins of creation, while Romans 8:19-23 describes creation's groaning for redemption, paralleling our innate hope in resurrection (1

Corinthians 15:51-54), affirming our pre-Fall immortality as a remnant of divine timelessness.

- **Dependence on the Divine**

The widespread human urge toward transcendence—whether directed towards the true God, distorted forms such as occultism, or even secular ideologies—reveals our original purpose: unceasing worship in God's presence (Revelation 4:8-11). Created for eternal adoration, this drive persists, although sin often misdirects it toward idols (Romans 1:25). The rise of atheism does not extinguish this drive but often conceals a hidden spiritual hunger, as all creation intuitively acknowledges a higher power. Psalm 95:6 (NIV) invites us: "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!" highlighting worship as an innate aspect of humanity. Acts 17:27-28 (NIV) explains that God placed humanity to "seek him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him," for "in Him we live and move and have our being." Exodus 20:3-5 warns against misdirected worship (e.g., idols akin to modern esotericism), while Romans 1:18-20 (NIV) asserts that God's invisible qualities are “clearly seen" in

creation, making the suppression of this dependence inexcusable while revealing its depth.

- **Creative Nature**

Our ability to innovate—seen in technological advancements, artistic endeavours, and problem-solving—reflects the Creator's boundless creativity in shaping the complexities of the universe (Genesis 1:1-31). As sub-creators entrusted with extending God's creative work, we transform chaos into order, akin to His act of creating the cosmos from a formless void. This trait persists as a spark of divine originality, inviting us to steward creation in a redemptive manner. Genesis 1:28 (NIV) grants dominion and implies a call to "subdue" the earth through innovation, while Exodus 35:30-35 illustrates Bezalel, empowered by the Spirit for craftsmanship, reflecting God's artistic sovereignty. Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) proclaims believers as "God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works," and Colossians 1:16 (NIV) affirms that all things were created "through him and for him," positioning human creativity as participation in the divine act.

What, then, is the role of Christ and the Holy Spirit in all this?

Well, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ serves as the means by which humanity's damaged image of God is progressively and ultimately restored to its intended fullness. Faith in Christ enables believers to be conformed to God's likeness, not through human effort alone, but by the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. Christ embodies the purest manifestation of the Image of God. As the eternal Son of God, He is the "exact representation of His being" (Hebrews 1:3, NIV), the visible likeness of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15, GNT). In Him, humanity's original design is exemplified without distortion. Through incarnation, He assumed our form to redeem it, declaring, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, GNT). Therefore, Christ's life, death, and resurrection provide the archetypal model for our renewal.

The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, "makes us more and more like Him as we are changed into His glorious image" (2 Corinthians 3:18, NLT), enabling the exercise of the God-like virtues we have discussed—relational love, eternal longing, worshipful dependence, and creative stewardship. The culmination occurs in glorification at Christ's return; we shall be "like him, because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2,

NIV), fully reflecting God's image in resurrected bodies (1 Corinthians 15:49).

Reflection Questions:

- Which part of this chapter stirs a question in you? How might praying for God's eyes change your view of it?
- Recall a time chaos felt close. What small step could show thanks for his mercy that day?
- Like Abraham, where in your life do you need child-like trust in God's timing? Jot one promise from his word to hold on to.

6. Seeing as God Sees (Part 2)

(i) Persevering Love

I attended a church service one fine Sunday morning. The worship and the subsequent small prayer went exceptionally well. Then, a member of the church took to the stage to announce the upcoming programmes and events for that week or month. Before leaving the stage, he encouraged the congregation to look around from their seats, introduce themselves to someone new, and share a high-five. As everyone engaged in this activity, the guest speaker arrived on stage and prepared to deliver the sermon.

As a newcomer, I found it refreshing to meet new people and learn about them during that brief interaction. I thought to myself, "What a wonderful ritual." Once the congregation settled back into their seats, the speaker promptly asked, "How many of you are children of God?"

Everyone, including myself, raised their hands without hesitation. Oh, how confident we were! The speaker then inquired, “Did everyone meet at least two to three people while I was getting on stage?” Some in the congregation responded with a loud “yes.” He then took a few steps back from the podium, paused, surveyed the room, and asked, “How many of you, children of God, believe you will remember the name of the person you shook hands with by the time you lay your head on the pillow tonight?” There was a profound silence; no one responded.

“Is everyone alright? Would you like me to repeat the question?” the speaker asked. From my vantage point, I noticed some individuals nodding slightly, indicating they had heard him. “Why do you think you won’t be able to remember the name of someone you just met moments ago? Is it due to the diminished attention span that many of you possess these days? Or is it because you felt compelled to participate? Do you shake hands or give a high-five out of a sense of duty, merely to please the announcer?” he asked in a firm tone.

"You all raised your hands confidently, claiming to be Children of God, correct? Do you think that if Jesus were among you, sitting beside a few of you, He would forget whom He exchanged a high-five with once He returns home?"

He approached the podium, began flipping through the pages of his Bible, and asked everyone to turn to Isaiah 49:16. Then he looked at everyone and said, "Look! Our God, whom you all profess to be children of, has inscribed the names of each and every one of you on His palms!" He then took a sip from the glass of water placed on his podium, looked up at the audience gathered in the hall, and said, "You don't need to inscribe the names of everyone you meet onto your palms, but as individuals claiming to be children of God, you must at least strive to imitate Him – exuding love that perseveres. Some of you have young children here. Observe them; they imitate their parents. As children of God, we should emulate Him as well. But are we doing this wholeheartedly? I know some of you may approach me later and say something like, 'I'm not good with names, but I can remember faces.' However, I would

argue that both you and I possess approximately 1500 grams of brain in our skulls. That's not a valid excuse." The audience then erupted in laughter. He paused until the laughter subsided and continued, "I have a principle I follow when getting to know someone: 'Invest five minutes to learn their name, how they look, etc., so that you won't be a fool for the rest of your life.' I personally make an effort to know whom I shake hands with. I sometimes ask them to spell their name and pronounce it aloud once so that my mind can register it and not forget their name later, as it would be embarrassing for me if I did."

"Love perseveres," the speaker remarked with a smirk as he quoted 1 Corinthians 13:7. "The drive, the intention, the effort, and eagerness matter to God. Jesus embodied all these qualities; He was willing to die for each of us without hesitation. He shed His blood for every human who has ever existed on this planet, both past and present," he continued.

"Imagine an old friend arriving at your home unexpectedly, bearing a gift on your birthday. You would

feel deeply cherished because that friend remembered you. Their thoughtfulness would demonstrate genuine concern. You would be amazed that someone beyond your family cares for you. This, in turn, can inspire you to be intentional towards others, initiating a chain reaction."

"Can the body of Christ remain unified if its members ignore or are indifferent to one another? Loving each other is not merely a feeling; it is the action you take as a Christian to know one another and to be *genuinely concerned* for each other. When driven by unconditional love, you reflect God's very own characteristics. If the current Christian community does not care for one another, they may not even notice if one of their members has drifted away from the light and ultimately become lost. Similarly, it would be challenging to keep track of those who leave immediately after the church service concludes."

He then continued, "The Bible does not elaborate on what the 99 sheep were doing while the shepherd left them in the wilderness to search for the one lost sheep. Many individuals who merely read their Bibles might assume

that these sheep were perfectly fine, enjoying the green grass beneath the blue skies, perhaps watching their shepherd frantically searching for the lost sheep. However, those who meditate on the word of God understand that the mother sheep, father sheep, friends, and relatives of that lost sheep are among the 99, likely bleating so that the lost sheep can hear their cries, find its way back, and rejoin the flock."

"That is what a true church does when it senses, much like the human body, that one of its members is exhibiting signs and symptoms of wavering faith. As the true church is part of one body (Christ) with various parts, each fulfilling its unique role, they come together to pray for that individual, express concern, offer financial assistance, visit their home, and pray over them."

"Our bodies respond in a similar manner." He then raised his left arm to display his left index finger and stated, "If I were to inflict a deep cut on my left index finger while chopping vegetables, my body reacts immediately to the pain and the blood loss, dispatching cells to the site of injury to seal it and form a clot, preventing excessive

bleeding. Over time, during the healing process, additional cells are sent to the area to combat infection and other pathogens that may enter my body."

"How much more should a church do to care for one another? How much more do you believe the church is capable of achieving?" he concluded while adjusting his wristwatch.

It was one of those brief, rare yet incisive sermons that I had the opportunity to attend, where the guest speaker focused more on correction than encouragement for the hosting church. Naturally, some in the congregation may have felt as though the log in their own eyes was being highlighted, but all I know is that a great physician often overlooks minor risks or discomforts caused by medication in light of its life-saving benefits. The benefit versus harm ratio is significant!

(ii) Hearts and Motives

How you interact with people, how you contribute to the church, how you engage in activities, how you negotiate

with your peers or colleagues, and even how you manage work-related matters – it is all being observed by God.

The intentions, the motives, and the decisions made in our heart are all significant to God.

Caiaphas was a self-serving individual who had served as High Priest for several years. As a leader of the Sadducees, he maintained a favourable relationship with Rome. The Sadducees opposed Jesus, as His teachings challenged their lifestyle, which they could not accept. Feeling that his power was threatened, Caiaphas conspired to orchestrate Jesus' murder (John 11:49-57). He chose to secure his authority and position by sacrificing Jesus, revealing his selfish motives. Moreover, he was involved in bribing the soldiers to conceal the news of the apparent resurrection (Matthew 28:11-15).

However, this man's malicious plan was part of God's overarching design for Jesus' sacrifice for humanity. God can utilise the devious schemes of individuals to fulfil His purposes.

It becomes evident that Caiaphas did not find security in his powerful position. He believed that once Jesus was put to death, he would attain peace, yet Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

In a similar vein, in 1 Samuel chapter 16, we see the prophet Samuel, sent by God to anoint one of Jesse's sons, David, as the next king of Israel. In verse 6, Samuel initially assumed Eliab was the Lord's chosen one based solely on his outward appearance, which seemed kingly or warrior-like. However, God informs him that while people judge by outward appearances, He looks at the heart.

James addresses issues of prejudice in chapter 2, questioning how one can claim to have faith in Jesus while favouring some individuals over others. He states in verse 4 (GNT) that such discrimination reveals our "judgements are based on evil motives." He encourages the church to love their neighbours, regardless of their wealth or moral standing, emulating Jesus' example during His time on Earth.

Furthermore, we see Paul encouraging Christians in Corinth to determine in their hearts the amount they should give. He emphasises that cheerful giving is more pleasing to God than contributions made out of reluctance or compulsion. In doing so, God promises to generously provide all that we need (2 Corinthians 9:6-10).

In the beginning, we observe God rejecting Cain's sacrifice (Genesis 4:3-7). The Bible does not provide clear details as to why this occurred, but it is evident that God detests the sacrifices of those with evil intentions, particularly when offered with improper motives (Proverbs 21:27). God evaluated not only Cain's sacrifice but also the condition of his heart.

It is essential to guard our hearts and maintain a clear conscience. We should earnestly seek God's assistance in creating clean hearts and renewing our spirits, as David implored in Psalms 51:10, for we serve a God who knows and examines all our hearts and motives.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

(iii) Entropy

Entropy, in simple terms, refers to the degree of disorder or randomness within a system—a lack of order or predictability that leads to a gradual decline into chaos.

Some time ago, I encountered an intriguing e-book titled "The Universe, Science and God" by Katie Lynn Daniels, which presents a unique perspective from the author.

In one chapter, she discusses the second law of thermodynamics and explains how it sheds light on the events that transpired in the Garden of Eden.

For those interested, the first law of thermodynamics states that energy can change forms but is neither created nor destroyed, while the second law asserts that entropy (disorder) consistently increases over time.

The author provides a relatable example: if you do not clean your room, it becomes increasingly dirty over time. Disorder escalates the more it is neglected. To reverse this disorder (entropy) in the room, one must exert energy coupled with intelligence. According to the author,

“Intelligence by itself will talk, but never work, and energy by itself simply dissipates into the atmosphere.” It is necessary to dedicate time to harness both energy and intelligence to establish order in the room or reverse its entropy.

The author further notes that time progresses in one direction—from the past to the present and into the future. As the second law of thermodynamics states, a teacup that falls to the floor and shatters does not magically return to the table and reform into a teacup. Disorder always increases.

The author cites Genesis 3:14-15 (GNT), which states, "Then the Lord God said to the snake, 'You will be punished for this; you alone of all the animals must bear this curse: from now on you will crawl on your belly, and you will have to eat dust as long as you live. I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head, and you will bite her offspring’s heel.'"

The author asserts that this passage reflects the curse associated with the second law of thermodynamics. With our disobedience, everything fell into disarray. Prior to this event, there was no death, no pain or sorrow; existence was vibrant, but it is now governed by death, leading to a transformation in the laws that dictate the very fabric of the entire universe. This demonstrates the profound destructiveness of sin, which altered the laws pertaining to order and disorder.

"Eden was a world where shards of porcelain jumped up onto a table and formed a teacup. Eden was a world where you cleaned your room, and it stayed clean. Eden was a world where the Second Law of Thermodynamics did not exist – where there was no entropy, no increase in disorder."[4]

(iv) Test and See

We are currently in the end of days, and the return of Jesus could occur at any moment. It is imperative to remain vigilant; we are witnessing the emergence of false prophets and various doctrines. These individuals operate

like snake charmers, enticing some to sway endlessly to their mellifluous messages. They are false shepherds leading unsuspecting sheep towards thorny bushes, cliffs, pits, and deep wells for their own benefit.

Peter, John, Jude, and many other apostles warned the churches and communities they led through their epistles about false teachers, their destructive tactics, and the importance of testing their claims.

I am grateful that their epistles are included in the 66 books of the Bible, allowing us to meditate on them today and ultimately helping us guard our hearts against the evil one.

In his first letter, John writes to some of the Gentile congregations to “test (them) to see if the spirit they have comes from God” (1 John 4:1, NLT).

The term "test" itself carries significant implications. Upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that only certain individuals within society possess the capability to test, examine, or investigate. Professions that come to mind include teachers, electricians, private investigators, doctors, and nurses who conduct and evaluate tests on

patients, as well as food inspectors and quality analysts. When we consider these professionals individually, we observe that they possess a level of expertise in their respective fields, granting them the authority to conduct tests, evaluate outcomes, and draw conclusions.

Could it be that John is urging his congregation to engage deeply with His Word, meditating on it day and night to attain the expertise necessary to safeguard themselves against false prophets, who are like hyenas and vultures?

Might the apostles be encouraging their congregations to acquire knowledge of Christ to such an extent that they can independently evaluate teachings and assist their fellow believers in remaining steadfast in their faith?

Certainly, they have provided us with a blueprint to assess teachers and determine whether their messages align with God's word. This involves examining whether their teachings correspond with the teachings of Jesus as found in the Bible, evaluating their commitment to the body of Christ (the believers), scrutinising their lifestyles, and assessing the fruits of their ministries. A crucial criterion

for such evaluation is whether these teachers acknowledge Jesus as both fully God and fully man.

In contemporary society, however, false teachers are gaining traction by delivering messages that cater to people's desires. Many individuals today are reluctant to have their spiritual condition illuminated; they resist correction and are disinclined to change their behaviour. They may believe they possess the freedom to act as they wish, yet they often become enslaved to whatever governs them. It is essential to recognise that failing to follow Jesus leads to the pursuit of our own sinful desires, resulting in bondage to our physical appetites. As stated in James 4:4, when we align ourselves with the world, we become enemies of God.

Prior to testing and determining whether someone is misinterpreting the word of God, it is advisable to grow in the knowledge of Jesus, who is our Lord and Saviour, so that we may come to know Him increasingly well. Peter, an impulsive individual during Jesus' time on Earth, made mistakes he later regretted. However, now filled with the Spirit, he begins and concludes his second and final letter

by urging his readers to acquire as much knowledge as possible about Christ, who lived among us, in order to be better equipped to combat false teachings (2 Peter 1:2, 3:18, NLT). We all have room for growth, and learning is a lifelong journey. Regardless of our current stage in our spiritual lives, whether we are "milk drinkers" or "meat eaters," we must care for one another, and every day we should strive to draw closer to Christ, being well-prepared to stand for the truth and defend the faith.

Reflection Questions:

- When was the last time your heart's motive surprised you? How might asking God to search it bring fresh peace?
- In a world of growing disorder, what one small act of order could you bring to your daily routine this week?
- Think of someone new you met lately. What one thing could you do this week to remember and reach out—like a high-five that lasts?

- Where do you sense God inviting you to know Jesus more? Pick a Bible passage to read slowly, then share one insight with a trusted friend.

7. S. A. D. and the Light that Lifts

'At that time Jesus said, "Father, Lord of heaven and earth! I thank you because you have shown to the unlearned what you have hidden from the wise and learned. Yes, Father, this was how you wanted it to happen…. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son…. "Come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke and put it on you, and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest. For the yoke I will give you is easy, and the load I will put on you is light." Matthew 11:25-30 (GNT).

"...anyone who hears the words of mine and does not obey them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain poured down, the rivers overflowed, the wind blew hard against the house, and it fell. And what a terrible fall that was!" Matthew 7:26, 27 (GNT)

The acronym in the title, S.A.D, stands for **S**tress, **A**nxiety, and **D**epression (the products of darkness in this world).

According to the Oxford Dictionary of English, the above three words are defined as follows:

Stress (noun): a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or demanding circumstances.

Anxiety (noun): a feeling of worry, nervousness, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome.

Depression (noun): feelings of severe despondency and dejection.

As I am very passionate about studying therapeutics and the management of various disorders of the human body, I am tempted to discuss the science behind them and their treatment algorithms. However, I will refrain myself from taking that route and focus primarily on a spiritual viewpoint rather than a psychiatric one, as there are many medical textbooks available for those who wish to educate themselves. I do not wish to replicate that here.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

I acknowledge that human wisdom on subjects like these is considerably vast, evidence-based, and continually updating, with promising research on the horizon. However, I also firmly believe that human wisdom is trivial and negligible in the eyes of our Father in heaven, especially considering that science is still attempting to comprehend God and His marvellous works while being constrained by human beliefs based on science, thereby hampering its progress.

Oh, how I sometimes wish that science would one day discover God, acknowledge all His works, and give Him the credit He deserves! Could that day ever arrive? Some of you may think I am being overly ambitious. While there is no harm in this, the sad fact is that humanity often attempts to theorise everything and seek evidence. If one fails to provide strong and convincing evidence, they tend to not believe in it.

"God in His wisdom has made it impossible for people to know Him by means of their own wisdom," says Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:21 (GNT).

Most of the world's population today behaves like Thomas, one of Jesus' disciples, who did not believe in the resurrected

Jesus until he touched His wounded palms. A certain degree of skepticism is healthy, as it encourages individuals to ask questions and seek answers. However, excessive doubt can lead to stubbornness and hinder the growth of faith. This is why I see Jesus expressing concern for us, as we often possess very little faith and tend to live by sight rather than by faith. It is essential to allow our doubts to deepen our faith by remaining with our questions longer and not giving up on seeking answers. After all, the great Albert Einstein himself once stated that he likes to "stay with the questions much longer".

We often allow our minds to dominate our thoughts, neglecting to ponder the Great Helper who lives among us! The worries, tensions, apprehensions, and fears we experience are all products of our lack of faith in the God who intricately created everything around us. It is absurd to claim that everything that exists is merely a product of chance. By believing this, individuals tend to rely solely on their own limited capabilities, thereby bearing unbearable burdens that lead to stress and ultimately overwhelm them.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

Why do we do this? Why do we attempt to control what we cannot manage? The uncertainties in our lives can be quite bothersome, can't they? A sense of unease and jitters can fill our hearts because we cannot see the future. Most importantly, we expect God to provide what we want, despite the fact that it is often us who restrict Him from intervening in our lives. We do not prioritise Him, we do not pray for His guidance throughout the process, we do not cultivate an intimate relationship with Him daily, and we do not allow God to assist us, yet we expect the unexpected while crossing our fingers!

Here is another curious behaviour we exhibit: when everything seems to fall apart (often due to our own actions), and we can no longer control the situation, we turn to God to "repair and restore" things back to how they were! Joshua and the Israelites did not consult God before going against the small city of Ai; they relied on their military prowess (Joshua 7:2-3). Only after their defeat did they turn to God to inquire about what had happened. Similarly, we often turn to God only when obstacles seem insurmountable. This is the unfortunate reality for many Christians today.

Jesus reminds us in the Gospel of John, chapter 15, that He is the true vine and emphasises the importance of remaining united to Him. He states in verse 5 (GNT): "…Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for *you can do nothing without me.*"

It is crucial for us to remain in Him first, and then He will remain in us. This is where obedience plays a key role in a Christian's life. His principles and commands must dwell within us. We must not only listen to His words but also obey, follow, and implement them. Then, whatever we ask in His name, we will receive!

Dear friends, you must recognise that the world you currently inhabit is filled with darkness and is ruled by the evil one. Everything here is a product of that darkness. All the pain, suffering, temptation, apprehension, disappointment, fear, and negativity that you encounter arises from our choice to pursue our will rather than God's will. We were created to obey Him and made for more. Adam and Eve heeded the Evil One by disobeying God's direct command, leading to the introduction of sin and death into existence.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

God instructs us to follow His will through the guidelines recorded in the Bible, which act as a protective boundary He has set around us. This boundary exists not because God is strict, but because He desires to shield us from the evil one, who is always seeking to devour us (1 Peter 5:8). God understands the devastating effects of sin on His children and does not want us to be lost. The only way to please Him is by adhering to His commands, and He rewards us immeasurably for doing so. Conversely, when we disobey and stray away, we cross the boundary set by God and become influenced by the sinful nature of this world. Darkness gradually consumes us through suffering, leading us into temptation, which encourages further sin and causes us to ignore His words calling us back to reconciliation. While we may hurt ourselves, we often cry out, "Where are you, God, when I need you?" or "Why did you leave me, Lord?" But it is we who have wandered away; He has never left us, not even for a moment.

If you are reading this, I urge you to stop dwelling on your past and how irreparable it may seem. Leave it as it is. You are loved by the God of heaven and earth, whose mercy endures

forever. Come back to Him. Do not heed the harmful words of the Devil, for they are vicious and self-inflicting. You may perceive them as the voices in your head, but they are his. He seeks your soul. Do not listen to him; he will always aim to steal, kill, and destroy. Avoid being like the foolish man who does not obey God's words and builds his house on sand; if you do so, you will lack stability, as Jesus warns in Matthew 7:27 (GNT).

You see, He yearns for you to listen to Him. He has always been gentle and compassionate. Following Him wholeheartedly must be your priority. In doing so, we demonstrate our love for Him, just as innocent children do for their parents. When we obey His commands, we are then called His own children. Yes, God's own children. It should not be difficult for God's children to obey His commands, just as it was not difficult for Jesus to obey His Father God's command to shed His own blood on the cross. This is how we will achieve victory over the world and everything in it!

Therefore, learn to let go and leave all consequences to Him so that you may live peacefully. Every star in the sky was placed there by Him, and He likely knows each one by name.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

It is impossible for Him to forget who you are, as He is the one who created you. He provides assurance by stating, "…even the hairs of your head have all been counted. So, do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows" in Matthew 10:30, 31 (GNT).

Just as a child lacks nothing under the protection of a father who provides for him, we too must not allow our minds to wander and fill us with life's apprehensions. If we worry, we demonstrate very little faith in our Father. He requires us to seek Him alone and His righteousness so that He can provide for all our needs.

Reflection Questions:

- What is one "shadow" weighing on you today? How might whispering Jesus' yoke invitation lighten it, even a fraction?
- Recall a time when doubt took deeper root—what question did you linger on, and what flicker of faith emerged?
- In a tangle of "fix it now," where could a simple "your will" prayer shift the soil beneath your feet?
- Picture abiding in the vine—what one small act of obedience feels like fruit budding this week?

8. Building Habits That Last

The start of a new year always brings a sense of renewal. Almost everyone devises plans or resolutions to pursue throughout the year, although some may struggle to adhere to their commitments. Common resolutions include losing weight through gym attendance, learning a new language, quitting alcohol or smoking, or increasing social engagement. Everyone aspires to improve upon their previous year's performance.

You might be reading this in the middle of the year and feel as though you have lost all hope and interest in sticking to your resolutions, teetering on the edge of giving up. There are myriad reasons why we lose momentum and abandon our goals.

According to the devotional *One Word That Will Change Your Life* by Jon Gordon, Dan Briton, and Jimmy Page, 50% of those who make resolutions fail by the end of January, and 9 out of 10 abandon them by March.[5]

Martin Meadows, the author of *365 Days with Self-Discipline: 365 Life-Altering Thoughts on Self-Control, Mental Resilience, and Success*, cites a meta-analysis conducted by researchers at the University of Victoria in British Columbia and the University of Amsterdam, which revealed that among individuals making fitness-related New Year's resolutions, 46% quit by June. Additionally, gym membership statistics from the International Health, Racquet & Sports Club Association present even more alarming figures – 67% of individuals with gym memberships never utilise them.[6]

Personally, I have never understood the concept of making resolutions at the start of the new year. When asked about my plans for the upcoming year, my typical response is, "I don't know," as I tend to be more of a "live in the moment" person. I prefer to decide (often spontaneously throughout the year) when I genuinely want to make a lifestyle change, outline everything necessary to implement the resolution (or execute the plan), establish small goals to achieve, and immediately immerse myself in it until it becomes a habit.

Many individuals who resolve to begin their chosen activities on the first day of the new year are taking a significant first step. While I commend this effort, I question whether they possess the requisite level of interest, resources, and commitment to sustain their resolutions throughout the year or into the future. Their motivation does not simply materialise at the dawn of 1st January; rather, it is influenced by their mindset.

Thoughts lead to decisions, which in turn lead to actions. Effective planning involves addressing potential "what if" scenarios. It prepares you to be adaptable and have contingencies in place to remain on course. Consider questions related to your journey, the path ahead, and your ultimate destination. For instance, "Do you envision how you want to look in a few months or years? Have you anticipated the obstacles you might encounter as time progresses? Have you considered dietary changes or acquiring resources to learn a new language? What if adverse weather conditions arise on a particular day? Will you be able to maintain your routine while on holiday?"

We must recognise that making resolutions is straightforward, but preparing for them in advance and remaining committed, regardless of the passage of time, requires a considerable level of focus and determination. Adhering to our resolutions involves habit formation. In essence, we are striving to establish habits that could potentially transform our lives.

How do we cultivate good habits? Consistency is the foundation of effective habits. We require self-discipline to form a habit.

Research indicates that to establish a habit, we need consistency and self-discipline for at least 66 days. Only then can we perform that activity consistently, such as waking up early and going to the gym, or brushing our teeth daily without needing self-discipline.[7]

Many individuals give up either because they do not enjoy what they are doing, lack support or an accountability partner, or both. If one does not relish the idea of sweating it out at the gym, consider walking, cycling, jogging with a dog, or taking up a new sport. Movement is essential; any form of physical activity is beneficial. We were never

intended to be sedentary. Forming friendships with individuals who share similar interests can also be advantageous. Support and accountability can motivate us to achieve our goals.

If it involves refraining from consuming high-calorie foods, such as pizza or cake, substituting them with healthier options like fruit or nuts can be effective. Visualising how we wish to look in the future aids in exercising self-control. When we repeatedly engage in the necessary actions, we witness the emergence of good habits, which begin to take root.

In his book, *365 Days With Self-Discipline*, Martin provides three tips for making resolutions stick, which I have summarised below:

1. ***Do not fall in love with the idea of starting***

It is perilous to share with everyone what we intend to do; we may become enamoured with the notion of embarking on something at the expense of actually doing it. In other words, we can declare our resolutions as long as we ensure

that we are doing so to garner support rather than admiration. Action is more significant than mere words.

2. ***Employ self-discipline to stay positive***

A predominantly negative mindset can lead to laziness and a lack of discipline. Many individuals do not observe the results they desire after several months of gym attendance due to not adhering to a new diet plan, struggling with muscle soreness, or simply lacking time. Actively working to overcome our default negative reactions and replacing them with a more positive attitude can uplift our spirits and provide the necessary impetus to engage in activities.

3. ***Focus on today***

The enormity of a task can often feel overwhelming. Setting small, attainable goals can facilitate progress and alleviate feelings of anguish. The question should always be, "What's on the agenda for today?" The most effective way to maintain consistency is to tackle tasks one at a time, gradually progressing until we reach our destination,

similar to the tortoise in Aesop's fable. As we achieve small goals day by day and week by week, the larger task diminishes until we ultimately reach our goal.

In an article published in the *Deccan Chronicle*, life coach Khyathi Birla observes that "people in the New Year spirit choose goals that are unattainable in a short span of time, and so as a result, their interest and enthusiasm for the resolution dissolves quickly." Another life coach, Priya Kumar, states, "One way to avoid falling into the same cycle again is to ensure that your resolution is sustainable and your goals are attainable." To achieve them, she advises to "be tolerant, patient, consistent, and persistent."[8]

As mentioned earlier, it is unnecessary to wait for the New Year to make a fresh start by formulating new resolutions. This approach often proves ineffective. Time is precious. The Bible states in Ecclesiastes 11:4 (GNT): "If you wait until the wind and the weather are just right, you will never sow anything and never harvest anything."

Moreover, prioritise God. Express your desire to enact change in your life to glorify Him in all that you do, as

stated in 1 Corinthians 10:31 (GNT). Most importantly, refrain from boasting about what you will do tomorrow, as "you do not know what your life will be! You are like a puff of smoke, which appears and then disappears," according to James 4:14 (GNT).

Seek God's permission, His divine guidance, and ask Him to instil you with determination and support you throughout your journey while maintaining a clear conscience. Learn to embrace and enjoy the process. Endure any discomfort with a positive mindset. Stay consistent. Cultivate good habits and track your progress. Ultimately, start now.

Reflection Questions:

- What is one small "win" from your past that built a habit? How could it inspire a fresh start right now?
- Picture a hurdle you're dreading—what's one backup plan that feels doable and kind to yourself?
- If God whispered one bit of guidance for your next step, what do you sense it might be?

9. Living to Give

*"For God loved the world so much that He **gave** His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life." John 3:16 (GNT)*

*"This is how we know what love is: Christ **gave** His life for us. We too then ought to **give** our lives for our brothers and sisters!" 1 John 3:16 (GNT)*

If you are a parent, you can understand how excruciatingly painful it can be to even imagine giving your only child to be sacrificed for the salvation of the whole world. You wouldn't even consider doing it to save one person! The sacrificial love of God truly knows no bounds when we reflect on it. We might think to ourselves, "Well, God knows the future. He knew Jesus would rise from the dead after three days, so He was sure of it and gave Jesus up for us." But what if God wanted to teach us how to be *sacrificial* just like He was? What if He

wants us to *love* like He does, without knowing what the future holds or expecting anything in return, thereby teaching us to live by faith and think eternally by solely seeking His Kingdom?

Why God Gives So Freely

The primary reason God created us was to have an eternal relationship with us. Since God is Love, as it says in 1 John 4:16, He wanted to share His love with us so we could love Him and each other. He loves us dearly and in an incomprehensible way because He chooses to—solely out of love and not out of necessity. However, true love exhibits its grandeur through action. He didn't rush off to create humans immediately; first, He had to establish the basic elements for us to exist, thrive, and sustain our lives, such as oxygen in the air, light for warmth, water, soil, the environment, and energy that changes from one form to another. As fragile and delicate as we are, He had to do certain things carefully and intricately before rolling out the red carpet for our grand entry!

Fast forward, we observe Him sending manna, quails, and water from a rock, His strong arm defeating His people's enemies, and sending ravens to feed His servant, among other

acts. Ultimately, we witness the zenith of His divine, incredible love in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus on this planet—God descending from heaven, living as humans do, laughing and crying, suffering, experiencing pain, joy, inconveniences, and unfortunate events, performing miracles, and then bearing the weight of humanity's sin to die on the cross once and for all. As I write this, I find myself, teary-eyed, reflecting, “What wondrous love is this!”

The two reasons for writing this chapter are to elaborate on the “He gave His only Son” part of John 3:16 and to discuss the significance of how love and giving are interconnected.

Examples of Giving from the Heart

The widow who gave the two small copper coins comes to mind when I reflect on the “He gave His only Son” part of John 3:16. In Mark 12:41-44, a crowd was putting their money into the temple treasury. Jesus sat across from them, observing everything, and noticed what this widow did. He told His disciples that she had given everything she had to live on. Her giving was a sweet-smelling, acceptable sacrifice that pleased God. It distinguished her from the crowd and became exemplary and iconic. Her act of giving served as a teaching

point for His disciples. It had such a profound impact that it was recorded in the Bible. Her small, seemingly insignificant offering, which might appear laughable to human eyes, was the only sacrifice that held true value in the Creator's eyes. It is safe to say that she gave just as God did—I assert this because God had no other but Jesus, who did not come in a blazing chariot of fire with all the accompanying pomp and menacing thunderous noise. He arrived on Earth like the rest of us, born to an ordinary human on a cold, silent night—just another grain of sand by the seashore!

How can we emulate the sacrificial spirit of this widow? While we typically give a percentage of our income to God, she offered everything she could live on. This distinction is significant. We often resemble the crowd—contributing only a portion of our earnings. It is important to recognise that giving is not solely about finances. We can dedicate our time to listen to someone share their struggles; we can invest our energy by volunteering in our communities; we can donate blood to save lives; and we can give away clothes, possessions, and items we no longer use. The Bible teaches that when we perform these acts of kindness for strangers, we

are ultimately serving God (Matthew 25:34-40). God observes our spirit when we give. Are we giving cheerfully or begrudgingly? Are we giving with overflowing gratitude in our hearts, or are we seeking recognition?

A Life of Giving That Lasts

William Colgate's friend, a canal-boat captain and a Christian, advised him, "Be a good man. Give your heart to Christ. Give God all that belongs to Him. Someone will be the leading soap maker in New York. It may be you!" William had already experienced failure in the soap manufacturing business at the young age of 19, but he was determined to try again in New York City after moving with his family from a small town called Shoreham, near London.

William made a vow similar to that of Jacob in Genesis 28:20-22, committing to place God first in his life. He also promised to give a tenth—a tithe—of his profits to God. In 1804, at the age of 21, William found employment with Tallow Chandlers Slidel & Co., where he gained further insight into the soap-making industry. When, two years later, the company ceased production, William was prepared to try again. William Colgate & Company achieved success from the outset. Within

six years, he expanded his laundry-soap business to include the manufacturing of starch. Later, he also produced hand soap and a variety of toiletry and shaving soaps.

As Colgate's business expanded, so too did his family. In 1811, he married Mary Gilbert, and they became the parents of 11 children, many of whom were given biblical names. They regularly attended church, held family worship, and read the Bible together. William became known as Deacon Colgate within his church community. He generously supported missions and Christian education, donating significant sums to several educational institutions, including Madison College in Hamilton, New York, which is now named Colgate University in his honour. William never forgot his promise to God; from the first dollar he earned, he devoted 10 percent of his net earnings to charitable causes. As his prosperity increased, he instructed his accountants to raise this amount to 20 percent and later to 30 percent. Remarkably, it seemed that the more he gave, the more he prospered.[9]

His legacy endures to this day through various cosmetic products, including toothpastes, soaps, and shampoos. This stands as a testament to God's faithfulness towards a man who

continually gave and did not withhold. At one point, Colgate amassed considerable wealth and could have succumbed to greed, hoarding his riches. Instead, he chose to continue giving and engaging in philanthropy.

Certainly, William Colgate exemplified a deep love and service to God in ways that were pleasing to Him. His motivations were not solely self-serving; his personal care products were genuine and offered value that encouraged repeat purchases year after year. His commitment to God is evident through his charitable endeavours throughout his life. In essence, his heart was focused on Jesus and generosity, and therein lay his treasure. That is where he found contentment in life, filled with gratitude.

Learning to Give with a Thankful Heart

Basic human nature, or worldly nature, inherently desires more. Once something is acquired, the pursuit of the next best thing begins, perpetuating a vicious cycle. It consistently questions, “What will I gain in return?” Where there is discontentment, we see no gratitude. To satisfy our desires, we often pray but do not receive our wishes due to our motives (James 4:3). In contrast, Godly nature is characterised by a

lack of grumbling or complaining and embodies contentment. Those who are content and filled with gratitude tend to give lavishly, demonstrating generosity and love. The poor widow, having lost her husband, likely relied on him as the sole provider for her family. Nevertheless, she chose to give all she had—not out of sadness or obligation, but from a heart of gold, a heart inclined towards giving. She could have waited until she earned more money to contribute to God, as many of us often do, but her faith in God's provision led her to the treasury. She believed that it was God who would always supply her needs, much like a shepherd tends to his sheep.

When Jesus died on the cross, He paid the ultimate price for us and redeemed us with His own blood, granting us the opportunity for eternal life with Him; thus, we do not belong to ourselves but to God (1 Corinthians 6:19, GNT).

It is essential to understand that true satisfaction comes when we believe and live in such a way that allows God, the creator of everything around us, to provide for all our requests, in faith and according to His perfect timing.

As I write this, two verses come to mind:

1. “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord.” Colossians 3:23 (GNT).
2. “…whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for God’s glory.”1 Corinthians 10:31 (GNT).

The underlined phrase “whatever you do” does not have to pertain solely to activities for which you are compensated. It can be as simple as helping your mother in the kitchen or assisting someone in carrying their grocery bags from the store to their car in the parking lot.

We Christians must move beyond self-centredness and actively embody one of the greatest commandments: to love one another. True religion extends beyond worship and attending church every Sunday. As James reminds us in James 1:27, “What God the Father considers to be pure and genuine religion is this: to take care of orphans and widows in their suffering…”

Tony Robbins, one of the most influential motivational speakers of our time, states, “Life is not about me. It is about we (us). People are suffering because you are obsessed with

yourself. You are fixated on something that happened, and now you have less, or you've lost something. When you realise that all suffering is an obsession with self, you can snap out of it. All you must do is stop expecting and start appreciating. If you are going to wait until you think you're going to have something, you're never going to have something of any size or scope. It is when you have nothing that you need to give."[10]

Regarding the importance of giving, Jesus said in Luke 6:38 (GNT): "Give to others, and God will give to you. Indeed, you will receive a full measure, a generous helping, poured into your hands – all that you can hold. The measure you use for others is the one that God will use for you."

So, my friends, I encourage you to reflect on this question: "What is the measure I am using for others?" "Am I fully committed to Jesus and those around me?" We are living in the end times; we must recognise that the people of this world are observing how we live, and God observes everything as well! He tells the Israelites in Isaiah 43:12 (GNT): "…you are my witnesses."

"As dedicated disciples of Jesus, absolutely everything we do in public—from social media posts, business websites, and blog content to our language, attitude, and the way we treat everyone we encounter—is a witness and testimony to our true relationship with God!"

---- Larry L. Nichols.[11]

Therefore, we must lead lives on this earth that reflect the awe and wonder of whom we worship. Let us strive diligently to do something for others, always placing our neighbours before ourselves without expecting anything in return during our time on this planet. Our promised grand reward awaits us above.

As Paul states in 1 Corinthians 10:33 (GNT), "…I try to please everyone in all that I do, not thinking of my own good, but of the good of all…" we must embody a spirit of passion and eagerness to fulfil our divine calling, much like Jesus did on His journey to the cross, which ultimately led to the reward of the eternal crown of glory.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

Reflection Questions:

- Reflect on a time when you sacrificed something for someone else. How did this experience alter your perception of God's care for you?
- Identify one way you can offer something other than money this week—such as time or a kind word—to someone in need.
- Consider a recent instance when you assisted someone. Did your actions stem from a grateful heart, or were you anticipating something in return? How might a Bible verse help you to view the situation differently?
- Envision your daily life as a "witness" to others (Isaiah 43:12). What minor adjustment could you make in your speech or behaviour to demonstrate Jesus' love more clearly?

10. The Tenth Commandment

"You must not covet your neighbour's house. You must not covet your neighbour's wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbour." Exodus 20:17 (NLT).

The Ten Commandments listed in Exodus chapter 20 serve as a set of prohibitions. Some are straightforward, while others possess deeper meanings.

When I encounter verses in the Bible that state, "Do not," "You must not," or "You shall not," my immediate response is to ponder, "What can I *do*?" or "What must I *do*?" or "If not this, then what else?" By asking myself these questions, I engage my curiosity, inviting God to teach me and guide me towards uncovering the hidden treasures within His Word.

From this verse, when God instructs us not to covet, I infer two key principles:

1. To be satisfied and content with what you have, to express gratitude, and to refrain from comparison.
2. To avoid envying or feeling jealous of what others possess.

This sentiment is reminiscent of Jesus's response to Peter: "If I want him (John) to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" as recorded in John 21:22 (NLT).

Reflecting on the dialogue between Jesus and Peter in John 21:18-23, it is evident that Jesus implies to Peter, "Why does it matter?" or "What is that to you?" or "What's that got to do with you? Everyone is different and has a unique purpose. Mind your own business. Stay in your lane."

Peter was not coveting or yearning for what John had; he simply wished to know John's fate, and Jesus admonished him not to be concerned.

Throughout my life, I have encountered the Ten Commandments numerous times—as a child, a teenager, and an adult. From memorising them in Sunday School to

hearing them discussed during sermons, devotionals, prayer meetings, and Bible studies, I have been exposed to them extensively. Growing up, I became accustomed to the New International Version (NIV), followed by the Good News Bible UK and Today's English Version (GNBUK/GNT) at my mother's recommendation, for at least 25 years.

I needed an update. Recently, my mother and my sister presented me with a New Living Translation (NLT) study Bible. While going through the book of Deuteronomy as part of my daily Bible reading from this newly acquired NLT version, I encountered the word "covet" in 7:25. Now, English is not my first language, but I had come across that word before. I was aware that it is seldom used in daily conversations and understood the general meaning of the verse, but something prompted me to investigate further, leading me to the tenth commandment.

I consulted a dictionary to ascertain the precise meaning of the word "covet." According to Google, it means to "yearn to possess or have (something)," which can be

interpreted as having a deep desire, craving, fancying, or obsessing over something.

This concept is echoed in Achan's statement: "I wanted them so much that I took them," found in Joshua 7:21 (NLT), which illustrates how his sin led to Israel's first defeat at Ai on the western side of the Jordan.

The pertinent question is: "What drives someone to covet?"

Reflecting on Genesis 4, where the first murder in the Bible is recorded, we see Cain's fury and scowl of anger when God rejected his offering in favour of Abel's. Despite God's warning that sin was crouching at his door and that he should overcome it, Cain disregarded His words.

Consequently, we witness the first instance of the phrase "comparison is the thief of joy" in the Bible, culminating in a murder!

Cain and Abel were brothers, not mere strangers. They were expected to embody brotherly love and care for one another. However, jealousy consumed Cain, leading him

to take a tragic step. Cain was supposed to do what was right in accordance with God's will, but he faltered. All he needed to do was reevaluate his approach, seek Abel's assistance, or at the very least, emulate his brother. Abel likely offered Cain consolation, guidance, or encouragement to improve, yet it is evident that Cain did not love his brother; rather, he envied him. 1 Corinthians 13:4 (GNT) states, “Love is not jealous or conceited or proud.” It was Cain's hatred towards Abel that ultimately drove him to commit murder.

I have pondered why God included “do not covet” as one of the Ten Commandments. Perhaps it was not solely because it led to the first murder, but because it is associated with a cascade of other sins and negative behaviours, such as stealing, adultery, greed, discord, restlessness, ungratefulness, and discontentment. This creates a seriously debilitating chain reaction of evil—one sin leading to another, akin to opening a can of worms. It resonates with James 3:16 (NLT), which states, “For where there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.”

In the New Testament, we also observe the elder brother of the prodigal son becoming angry when his father killed a fattened calf to celebrate the return of his younger son (Luke 15:28-30, NLT). He tells his father, "All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends…" This reaction is indeed surprising. Instead of sharing in his father's joy at the return of his younger brother after such a long absence, he responded with anger. The mere comparison he made in that brief moment ignited his resentment.

The disciples were not pleased with James and John too when they requested Jesus to allow them to sit on either side of His throne. They desired the same thing that the sons of Zebedee sought. (Mark 10:41, GNT)

It appears that no one is immune to the detrimental effects of comparison; it is ingrained in our human nature. The writer of Proverbs aptly stated, "Peace of mind makes a body healthy, but jealousy is like cancer." (Proverbs 14:30, GNT).

It is undeniably accurate that we completely lack peace of mind when we constantly look to our left and right to measure ourselves against those around us. Furthermore, upon examining this futile game of comparison, we find that it has no winners.

Sandra Stanley, in one of her devotionals discussing comparison, notes that when we feel we do not measure up to those around us, envy and jealousy take root. Conversely, when comparison seems to favour us, pride and arrogance take hold. She further explains that the most insidious form of comparison leads us to take pleasure in the misfortunes of others. Indeed, there are individuals who have admitted to feeling a sense of satisfaction upon hearing of a friend's breakup or witnessing a colleague's failure to secure a promotion.[12]

So, how do we rid ourselves of this stubborn evil that binds us and prevents us from reaching our full potential?

Firstly, we must recognise our uniqueness.

Consider us all; we each look different. Moreover, no two individuals in this world possess the same fingerprints.

How intricate is His creation! At times, I pause everything I am doing and, in the stillness, I marvel at the magnificence of His workmanship. I do not need to seek out beautiful scenery characterised by mountains and valleys; I can simply sit in this place as I type this sentence and appreciate my surroundings—the furniture in my home, my books, my laptop, my cellphone, etc. For 1 Corinthians 10:26 (GNT) states, "…The earth and everything in it belong to the Lord."

God calls Jeremiah to be His messenger in Jeremiah 1:4 (GNT), saying, "I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born, I selected you..."

Every one of us has been personally selected and chosen by God to carry out His works (what we are meant to do). From the aforementioned verse, we learn that each of us has a unique purpose, and we should not spend our brief time on this planet trying to be like or better than someone else.

The Bible also states in Genesis 1:27-28 (GNT) that, "God created human beings to be like Himself…and put them in charge over everything."

Therefore, we must cease conforming to the world's tendency to impose limits through comparison and instead strive to be like God, utilising the great potential and gifts bestowed upon us. As stated in Ephesians 2:10 (GNT), "God made us what we are…for a life of good deeds, which He has already prepared for us to do."

Whenever we observe others seemingly surpassing us in life—such as securing impressive jobs, marrying, or starting families—we must remain steadfast and trust in God's timing. While we exercise patience and await His promises with hope, we should live for Him wholeheartedly, fulfilling our purpose by utilising the gifts that have been given to us. This aligns with the message in Romans 12:6 (GNT): "…use our different gifts in accordance with the grace that God has given us."

Furthermore, Colossians 3:23 advises, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for human beings."

When we approach our tasks as outlined in the above verse, it becomes nearly impossible to be distracted by the accomplishments of others.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

Additionally, we must cultivate an attitude of gratitude towards God for what He has provided us. We should take the time to count our blessings.

Gratitude fosters growth by helping us become content with what we possess. It aids in maintaining a healthy and mature relationship with God by shifting our perspective. Therefore, we should never cease to thank God for what He has accomplished in our lives.

We become weary, depressed, and dissatisfied with our lives when comparison overwhelms us. This provides an opportunity for the devil to suggest that God has forgotten us or that there may be a delay in the reception of our blessings. I urge you, never fall for that trap!

The writer of Hebrews in 13:5 (GNT) states, "…be satisfied with what you have, for God has said, 'I will never leave you; I will never abandon you.'" Paul in 1 Timothy 6:6 (GNT) states, "Religion does make a person rich, if he is satisfied with what he has."

Thirdly and finally, we need to learn to respect everyone around us.

We were not created to have selfish motives; such motives are evil. God judges our intentions and provides for us accordingly. Romans 12:10 (GNT) says, "…. be eager to show respect for one another."

We must display God's presence in our lives through our good deeds. Hebrews 12:14 (GNT) states, "Try to be at peace with everyone, and try to live a holy life, because no one will see the Lord without it."

We all possess different talents and each of us excels in some area. Use your gifts to glorify God in every way possible. Learn to encourage one another and celebrate each person's success around you, for we are God's children, and we are also meant to be the salt and light of this world.

Reflection Questions:

- Where has a "what's that to you?" nudge from Jesus quieted your glance lately?
- Name one gift in your corner today—what thanks could you express to root it deeper?

- Amid a neighbour's bloom, what small honour might you extend this week?
- In your unique way, what prepared deed from Ephesians 2:10 calls you next?

Conclusion

As we conclude this journey through *Seeing Through God's Eyes*, the chapters converge on a unified truth: faithful living flourishes when we surrender our fractured vision to the clarity of Scripture and the Spirit. From Saul's misstep in Chapter 1—where "right over good" demands costly obedience—to the fiery resolve of Daniel 3 in Chapter 3, we have traced how God's gaze redeems human folly. Disappointment, as explored in Chapter 2, yields to devotion when anchored in James 1:12, while patience in Chapter 4 triumphs over procrastination through Hebrews 6:17's promise of an unchangeable purpose.

The heart of our exploration, Chapters 5 and 6, unveils divine perception: from wrestling with God's origins (Deuteronomy 29:29) and His presence amid chaos (Lamentations 3:22–23) to probing motives (1 Samuel 16:7) and countering entropy with persevering love

(Isaiah 49:16). Subsequent chapters apply this lens practically—Chapter 7's light piercing S.A.D. via Matthew 11:28–30; Chapter 8's enduring habits rooted in Ecclesiastes 11:4; Chapter 9's sacrificial giving echoing John 3:16; and Chapter 10's contentment guarding against coveting (Exodus 20:17).

Now, dear reader, the true work begins—not in distant ideals, but in the quiet forge of daily choices.

Reflect: In what sphere does your vision falter most—perhaps in the unmet prayers of Chapter 2, or the jealous glances of Chapter 10? Journal, then counter them with bold prayers from Chapter 5: "Lord, let me see as You see."

You may be an atheist who picked up this book and read about God's origins in Chapter 5, thinking, "What in the world is this?" Alternatively, you could be someone focused on this book's downsides and loopholes, believing it would not positively or spiritually affect anyone and taking pleasure in its perceived failure—as my good German-speaking friend, Erick Nessel, puts it—*Schadenfreude*. All I can

do is point the way, but acceptance depends on a receptive heart. I am not worthy to be a bondservant of Jesus or even a tool in His hands. I am merely ink on paper that He has used to speak to you, my friend. Though some may consider this a significant and exceptional work, according to Isaiah 64:6, even this is filthy through and through.

I know I've cited Bible verses throughout the book mostly from English versions like Good News Translation (GNT) and New Living Translation (NLT). While some may think these are "weaker" translations since they mostly rephrase and tend to "dilute" the literal meaning behind God's Word, for me, those are translations through which I gained discernment, as they speak to my heart and not just my mind. I admit that I am a non-native English speaker and grew up meditating on a GNT version of the Bible. While I respect literal, word-for-word English Bible translations like King James Version (KJV) and New American Standard Bible (NASB), I do not place them on a pedestal or worship them as idols as some do. Our

God has the power to speak to us even through the most "diluted" versions and is not restricted to just a few literal translations. Consider languages like Khasi, spoken by an ethnic community in eastern Meghalaya, India, which has only one long-standing Khasi Bible version. God speaks to them through it when they meditate on it, regardless of whether that version is diluted or weak. May we never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit living among us, guiding us as we engage with the Word day and night humbly and obediently.

Beloved, the invitation stands: Commit afresh to this God-sight, not as a fleeting resolution but as a lifelong covenant. All I can say is this: "This is the hour to receive God's favour; today is the day to be saved!" (2 Corinthians 6:2, GNT). As I mentioned earlier, this is just me sharing what I have learnt through the meditation of His Word, and if God announces that an evil man is going to die but I do not warn him to change his ways so that he can save his life, then he will die, still a sinner, and God will hold me

responsible for his death. If I do warn an evil man and he does not stop sinning, he will die, still a sinner, but my life will be spared (Ezekiel 33:8-9, GNT).

May the Lord, who engraves you on His palms (Isaiah 49:16), grant you eyes to see His faithfulness anew each dawn. As He breathed life into dust (Genesis 2:7), so breathe resolve into your spirit. Go forth in the peace that guards against coveting, the patience that outruns time, and the love that gives without measure. The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace (Numbers 6:24–26, NIV). Until we see face to face, walk boldly through His eyes.

Bibliography

1. Why Do Christians Leave the Faith? Breaking up with a God Who Failed Them http://www.patheos.com/blogs/blackwhiteandgray/2011/11/why-do-christians-leave-the-faith-breaking-up-with-a-god-who-failed-them/

2. Kenneth W. Osbeck. *101 Hymn Stories: Inspiring, factual backgrounds and experiences that prompted the writing of 101 favourite hymns*, 2015, p. 126-127.

3. https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/4518-called-to-create/day/2

4. Katie Lynn Daniels. "The Universe, Science, and God", December 1, 2013, pp. 4-6. https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewBook?id=0

5. https://jongordon.com/positivetip/oneword2019.html

6. https://www.exercise.com/grow/unused-gym-memberships-percentage/

7.http://routineexcellence.com/psychology-of-habits-form-habits-make-stick/

8. https://www.deccanchronicle.com/lifestyle/viral-and-trending/050118/new-year-new-me.html

9. "Tithing: Colgate, Kraft and Heinz." *Stories for Homilies*. 2016. https://stories4homilies.blogspot.com/2016/12/tithing-colgate-kraft-and-heinz.html.

10. "Tony Robbins: I Was Broke." *Goalcast*. https://www.goalcast.com/tony-robbins-broke/.

11. Nichols, L.L. [@LarryLNichols]. (2018, January 16). As dedicated followers of Jesus... [Post]. X. https://twitter.com/LarryLNichols/status/953204532799979520

12. https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/2169-comparison-trap

About the Author

Dr. Anudeep Manne is a licensed pharmacist whose journey has woven together the precision of science, the call of faith, and the quiet rhythms of service. Born and raised in Telangana, India, he earned his Pharm.D. (Post-Baccalaureate) degree from Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences in 2015, fueling a career that began as a Junior Research Analyst for Pfizer at Excelra in Hyderabad. He later served as an Assistant Professor at Jayamukhi College of Pharmacy in Warangal, where he balanced lectures on Pharmacotherapeutics with the joy of teaching Sunday school at his home church—a role that deepened his passion for sharing God's love with the next generation.

In the spring of 2019, a new chapter unfolded as he relocated to Canada, settling first in the Kitchener-Waterloo region of Ontario. While working as an Order Processing Specialist at

Bell Canada, he became a certified phlebotomist, navigating the demands of immigrant life with grace and gratitude. Those years honed his resilience and empathy, qualities that now enrich his writing. Returning to Telangana in 2025, he resides with his parents in their serene rural home, cherishing the simple blessings of family and community.

Faith has always been his anchor. In his free time, Anudeep enjoys volunteering, going to the gym to stay fit, contributing reflective essays to his Medium blog, and occasionally nurturing his creative spirit through poetry—two of his pieces are included in *"Stones Before the Ocean: A Worship Poetry Anthology,"* edited by Daniel Paul Gilbert. He is particularly proud of his sister, Anusha, a fellow wordsmith and author of *"Seal's Promise,"* who builds her life with her family in the United States.

As Dr. Anudeep Manne embarks on authorship with this debut book, he writes not as an expert but as a fellow traveller on the path of grace—inviting you to join the conversation, share your story, and discover together how God's whispers echo in our everyday lives.

Dr. Anudeep Manne

Connect with him at X, https://x.com/AnudeepManne, through his Medium blog, "Blessedology with Anudeep" (https://medium.com/@Blessedology); he would be honoured to hear from you.

Notes